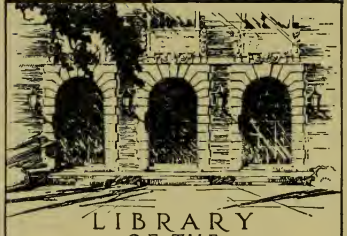

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# MELANTHE;

OR,

# THE DAYS OF THE MEDICI.

## A Tale of the Fifteenth Century.

BY

MRS. MABERLY,

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# MELANTHE;

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## CHAPTER I.

It was evening—and yet Elphenor had not quitted the spot, which, since sunrise, he had constantly occupied; but, as the fading of the light disturbed the course of his studies, he threw his head back, and cast a look of impatience upon the glorious West, the crimson flush upon which announced that another day had passed. The deep blue wave of the Bosphorus was losing the golden tinge of the sunlight, and the shadows gathered fast on the majestic hills of the opposite shore, ere Elphenor could tear himself from the pursuit in which he delighted, and bring back his thoughts to the present hour. The ragged and discoloured leaves of a manuscript, in characters of ancient Greek, which was spread out upon the table before

him, showed the nature of his study; but the reverential care with which, ere he quitted the room, Elphenor collected and arranged these leaves, proved how deep was the interest with which their contents had inspired him. The apartment in which he sat, showed still more plainly the tastes of its owner, being the nearest approach to an extensive library that was to be found in the house of any private individual of the Greek Empire, as early as the beginning of the fifteenth century.

The newly discovered art of printing had not yet found its way to Constantinople, and the bulk of some of the manuscripts often rendered it difficult to transport them from place to place. But to Elphenor the formation and increase of his library had been a work of delight, and in it he found the solace of many hours which otherwise might have been productive of heaviness and discontent, by leaving a powerful and ardent mind to prey upon itself. Elphenor was still in the prime of life. Formerly the bosom friend and preceptor of Constantine, his time and talents had been devoted to the service of the state; but differences having arisen between him and his royal pupil, Elphenor had for some time retired

from the court of Constantinople, and in the seclusion of his villa bestowed his whole attention upon the study of literature and philosophy. There, in his quiet room, did he delight to bury himself, and surrounded by his books,—treasures in the collection of which he had spared neither trouble nor expense, he would forget his wrongs, and, elevated and enchanted by the glories of thought and image revealed by the poetry of the ancients, so abstract himself from the material world, that it was frequently difficult to recal his wandering mind to the more sober realities of earth.

The labour or the pleasure of the day was now over; and Elphenor rose, and, quitting the house, descended the terraced garden which led towards the sea. He moved slowly on, sometimes disappearing in the shade of the hedges of myrtle and oleander which bordered the path:—but having arrived at the end of the garden, he paused, and for a few moments gazed intently upon the road which led from the walls of the villa towards Constantinople. It appeared as though he endeavoured through the fading light to trace the many windings of the road; but soon he turned,

and ascending some steps which led to a terrace overhanging the sea, he leaned against the marble balustrade; and the heaviness which had hitherto clouded his brow, gradually faded from it, as he contemplated the luxuriance of the scene before him, of which his own villa formed a conspicuous feature. Slowly his eye scanned each object in its turn, as his glance wandered over the beauties of that shore which is unequalled in loveliness by any other in the known world.

The banks of the Bosphorus, on the European side, presented a continued succession of convents, churches, and villas, interspersed with vine-clad terraces and gardens, so thickly planted with odoriferous shrubs, that the air was often heavy with their perfume. Midway upon the hill which crowned the promontory at the narrowest part of the straits, stood the dwelling of Elphenor. The Northern side was defended from the chill blasts of the Euxine sea by a magnificent wood of oak and cedar, which stretched to the summit of the hill; while upon the Southern side, all that good taste could devise, or art accomplish, had been lavishly bestowed, in order to enhance the natural beauty of the spot. The house was a long and somewhat

low building, relieved in the centre by a lofty portico. The spray of a fountain glittered between the columns of marble, and around, at intervals, were ranged the most beautiful statues and vases, not only upon the terrace and the steps, but interspersed among the profusion of dark-leaved and bright-flowering shrubs adorning the garden. Here and there, a large single oak or chestnut spread its branches afar, as though offering a cool retreat from the ardour of the sun; while thick clusters of magnolias and pomegranites mingled with the laurels which from the ends of the terrace dipped their branches in the water. The strait was so narrow that the opposite shore, covered with its bright kiosks, was distinctly visible; and upon a calm evening the voice of the Muezzin calling the faithful to prayer, from the minarets of the distant Turkish villages, might be heard by the holy Greeks, whose convents and churches, peeping out from the shade of their laurel and cypress groves, were thickly studded on the European shore.

As Elphenor gazed upon his home, it seemed as if he had never before sufficiently appreciated the

luxuriance of beauty by which it was surrounded. The day was fading, and the deepening shadow added to the rich variety of the scene. Not a sound broke the stillness of the evening, save the monotonously regular plashing of an unruffled sea upon the beach below, as the deep waters of the Bosphorus glided rapidly by; or, now and then, the plaintive note of some sweet singing-bird calling to his mate from the orange and lemon groves, the heavy fragrance of whose flowers hung upon the lulled and breathless air. All was hushed,—and it might have been thought that in that spot, so full of peace and beauty, the spirit of man would have found rest. Yet Elphenor, as he dwelt upon the scene before him, appeared disturbed by some thought less tranquil than the hour; for he sighed heavily, and, with a restless and dissatisfied expression of countenance, turned from the contemplation of his home, and fixed his eyes upon the waves beneath. For some time he remained standing in the same attitude, his arms folded, and his head bent slightly downwards, when a light step was heard advancing, and a form of such surpassing beauty glided to his side, that

it seemed as though one of the sculptured images of perfection, with which he had delighted to adorn his dwelling, had suddenly breathed into life, and, descending from its pedestal, had come to repay him for his admiration by the tender offices of love.

" Elphenor !" said a voice so soft and low, that but for the gentle pressure of a hand upon his arm, it might have failed to arouse the attention of him to whom it was addressed.

" Ida ! my beloved !" he exclaimed ; and, as he spoke, the cloud vanished from his brow, and he gazed with passionate fondness on the fair being who stood with his hand clasped in hers, and a face beaming with love, although a look of reproach struggled through the tenderness of her smile. She did not speak again ; still it seemed as if Elphenor had read her thoughts, for he drew her to his bosom softly, as though she had been a young child, and covered her brow and lips with gentle kisses.

Well might the sternest have been moved by the beauty and tenderness of such a being as Ida. A Sciote by birth, she united the symmetry of the Greek

form with the more commanding air and height of the Circassians, from whose country her mother had derived her origin. From her, Ida had inherited the stately step and noble outline of the head and neck, which so much distinguished her from other women; while the long half-closed eye, with its black fringes and the slightly-curved upper lip, belonged more to the Grecian order of beauty. As she leaned upon the balustrade, the thin chemise of white gauze with its hanging sleeves, veiled, but did not conceal the beauty of her neck and arms: a small green jacket, embroidered with gold and pearls, confined at the waist by a jewelled clasp her flowing petticoat of white; while a few of the bright scarlet flowers of the pomegranite were the only ornaments mingled with the long raven tresses of her hair. Such was Ida—the beauteous wife, upon whose face Elphenor continued to gaze in silence, and with a look of sadness.

"Elphenor," she said timidly, "another day has passed, and I have not seen you. I shall be jealous of your studies, if they occupy all your attention."

"They do not steal one thought from you, dearest Ida," replied Elphenor; "but I have been

of late more oppressed than usual; I am not as I once was, and my heaviness may weary you;—I am best alone."

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Ida, "do not speak thus. Am I not your wife? and ought I not to share your sorrows? Nay, it is my right," she continued, playfully taking the hand of her husband, and looking up into his face with childish glee, as if hoping by her gaiety to dispel the gloom which again began to settle upon his brow: but Elphenor only sighed.

"I cannot bear to see you thus. Speak to me, my own Elphenor," said Ida—her eyes filling with tears. "None but the sinful should grieve thus while surrounded by blessings."

"You think me then without sin, Ida; without cause for self-reproach?—Alas, would it were so!"

"How?" exclaimed Ida, somewhat startled by these words; "surely, if ever being was faultless, it is my own Elphenor. You," she continued hurriedly, as if fearful of contradiction, "you, whom all men revere—and every one, even the holy hermit Gennadius, comes to consult as more holy than himself; you cannot be sinful—it is impossible."

" And is it not a sin," replied Elphenor gravely, " to waste in useless inactivity the life that God has given?—to feel that not only the attainment of knowledge is within our reach, but that its application, by which millions of fellow creatures might benefit, is within our power; and yet to withhold all —to feel that day by day we but exist for ourselves, instead of living for others—for our country —for posterity?"

" Alas!" said Ida, sadly, as she marked the glowing cheek and flushing eye of her husband, " if this is the result of your incessant studies, have I not reason to fear them? Look round, Elphenor, and say, have we not all to make us happy, but the will to enjoy it? Does not this paradise belong to us? There, in that dear home, sleeps our treasure—our beauteous infant Melanthe - - - - and," continued Ida, while her voice faltered, and tears of tenderness fell from her eyes, as she twined her slender fingers among the dark curls upon her husband's forehead, " Have we not each other?"

" Yes, my beloved Ida," exclaimed Elphenor, clasping her to his heart; " I am indeed rich in blessings, far beyond my desert—but still ——"

" Still you regret the court and your high station. This seclusion is irksome to you : I know it is," said Ida, somewhat pettishly.

" You speak as a woman, my sweet Ida—a fond and timid woman ;—*we* have higher duties to perform ; and to shrink from them to ensure a life of peace and ease is degrading, and wrong."

" Then why not seek a reconciliation with the Emperor," suggested Ida, " if you are desirous of re-entering the toils and cares of public life ?"

" The counsels of Elphenor must be sought—not offered like the flippant service of a menial," answered Elphenor, proudly.

" Alas !" said Ida, sadly, " few know the real value of any thing till they have lost it. Doubtless, the Emperor has often regretted the obstinacy which drove you from him—though you cannot expect that I should do so, Elphenor, since it gave you to me. In the hurry of public affairs, you would never have found time to have sought for a wife ; but," continued Ida gaily, " I must make you confess that the days of our wedded life have not been the most unhappy of your existence."

" I were unworthy of so great a treasure as my

beauteons Ida, did I not own it," said Elphenor softly.

"Then I will not ask for another word," exclaimed Ida, rapturously. "And now farewell—it is late, and I must hasten to Melanthe—you will come in soon."

"Yes, soon," replied Elphenor; and Ida left him, and turned towards the house. Elphenor continued to watch until the last glimpse of her white dress disappeared beneath the portico; the gloom of his brow had softened to a gentle melancholy, and he stood with his eyes fixed upon the spot which contained his wife and child, until the stern reasoning of the philosopher gave way before the tenderness of the husband and the father. The words of the gentle Ida recurred to him, "Few know the real value of any thing until they have lost it;" and he shuddered as he thought of the troubles which, even at that moment, threatened the country of his love, and the dangers to which the dear inmates of his peaceful home might be exposed, should he be once again launched upon the stormy sea of public life.

## CHAPTER II.

After the form of Ida had disappeared from his view, so deep was the reverie into which Elphenor had fallen, that he was quite unconscious that for some minutes a sharp sound had broken upon the stillness of the night. At length, as it continued to approach, a jarring sensation upon his nerves, as though he had been suddenly aroused from sleep, made him start, and he turned his head in the direction from whence the sound proceeded. Nearer and nearer it came, until the regular step of horses ridden at a rapid pace became distinct, and in a few moments two horsemen were seen descending the hill by a road which wound outside the walls of the villa. At the first appearance of the riders, even the clearness of an Eastern night could not enable Elphenor to decide upon their probable rank or business; but, as they approached, his attention became suddenly fixed, and an expression of surprise and doubt, not unmixed with pleasure,

overspread his countenance. It soon became evident that his presence was also perceived by the horsemen, for they quickened their pace, and in another moment one of them dismounted, and throwing the rein of his horse to his companion, began rapidly to ascend the broad flight of marble steps which led to the terrace where Elphenor stood. The dark cloak and plain riding dress of the stranger did not conceal the grace of the form beneath; and from the elasticity of the step, and carelessness of manner which marked his movements, it might have been supposed that the visitor of Elphenor had scarcely passed the age of boyhood. His countenance also, expressing as it did a light-hearted gaiety, confirmed the suspicion; and although the long brown curls turned loosely back from a forehead white as snow, the gentle smile and languid expression of the large hazel eyes, gave to his appearance a slight degree of effeminacy, the defect was somewhat to be excused, for, in fact, the stranger had not passed his twentieth year. Yet with all this grace of childishness mingled a dignity which redeemed it from too much softness; and, upon more close observation, might have

been detected even in that laughing manner an expression which spoke the habit of command. No sooner had the figure of the stranger become, beneath the bright gleam of the stars, fully visible to Elphenor, than the look of uncertainty which his features had hitherto worn, disappeared from them, and with a hurried step he advanced to meet his visitor, in whom, notwithstanding his disguise and the unusual mode of his appearance, he had recognised the Emperor Constantine. Arrived within a few paces, Elphenor would have bent his knee before his royal guest; but the latter hastened to prevent him, exclaiming, as he kindly extended his hand,—

"Reserve your homage for another time, dear Elphenor. It is as a friend, and not as the Emperor, that Constantine now seeks you."

Elphenor only replied by a deep reverence, and by pressing to his lips with much respect the hand which his sovereign had extended to him.

"I see I am not yet forgiven," said Constantine, after a moment's pause, during which he appeared to view with pain the cold and grave demeanour of his former friend and preceptor. "Surely," he

continued, "a penitent can do no more than confess his fault, and sue for pardon."

"It would ill become me," replied Elphenor, "to withhold aught that your Majesty might desire; but alas! when I was compelled to withdraw my services, it was only ——"

"I know, I know," interrupted Constantine, "all that you would say. It was my folly—my headstrong folly, that drove from me my only friend. Oh! you know not how bitterly I have repented it. Return to me, Elphenor; return, to bless me with your counsels and your kindness; your presence will awe the buzzing crowd of sycophants that surround me. Return, and in all I will be guided by your wisdom."

"My gracious sovereign, were I to listen," began Elphenor; but the impetuous Constantine again interrupted him:—

"You must listen; you must promise; onl say you will return, and I will pledge my royal word, that the points on which we differed shall no more be urged."

"How shall I thank your Majesty for such gracious words?" replied Elphenor, much affected

by the evident sincerity of the young Emperor. " Still, I dare not say that I could weigh my conscience against the state expedients that ——"

" Nay, you must have known," broke in the Emperor, with a gesture of impatience, " that when I yielded to the clamour of my people, and abandoned the design of uniting the two churches, it was a cause of grievous sorrow to me; and not the less so," he added affectionately, " because it was the chief reason of *our* quarrel."

" Let not your Majesty, I implore," exclaimed Elphenor, solemnly, " urge a temporal reason for a grief which should have sprung from a sense of error towards heaven. Alas! thus, when we waver in our duty, are we ever ready to seek a shelter from our conscience—conscience, the only monitor that never flatters."

The Emperor smiled. But he knew too well the uncompromising rectitude of Elphenor, to be the least offended by the calm sternness of his manner.

" Be that as it may," he replied to the last remark of his preceptor; " but oh! Elphenor, if you ever loved me, do not now reject my prayer!

Since you left me, you know not what I have suffered! Alas!" he continued, in a tone of deep feeling, "without one true friend and adviser, what must a monarch be? What but a puppet in the hands of his greedy courtiers! A tool to forward their designs of place and power, and popular so long only as he yields to their wishes."

"Is it not rather," replied Elphenor, "that decision is wanting, to assert the power that would make it otherwise?"

"I know not," cried Constantine bitterly; "but, dear Elphenor, you cannot guess the difficulties with which I am beset. Since you left the court, not one word of truth have I heard. I know not in whom to confide, and therefore I withhold my confidence from all, while each of my ministers openly boasts of alone possessing it. There is Luca Notaras, the grand admiral, daily he wearies me with advice, which I as constantly reject; and yet he announces to all that I see but with his eyes."

"The noblest steed may swerve from the sting of the meanest insect. God grant that your majesty may not already have been turned from the

right way by the underhand machinations of Notaras," exclaimed Elphenor, between whom and the grand admiral no goodwill had ever existed.

"How mean you?" asked the Emperor quickly.

"When his wisdom persuaded your majesty to refuse the hand of the Lady Bianca, daughter to the Doge of Venice, he shook with an insidious hand one of the firmest props of your empire. The Venetian republic will not soon or easily forgive the affront."

"By all the saints, it is too true!" exclaimed the Emperor. "Would to God, I had never listened to his boast, that the ships of the empire could sweep the seas of all the Venetian galleys in an hour. The time may come, when I would fain see a few of them at anchor in the Golden Horn."

"Evil was the counsel to reject an alliance so honourable," observed Elphenor.

"What could I do?" asked the Emperor, whose chief fault was indecision of character. "I was ready to marry any princess whose alliance might have been of service to the state—yet not one could be found to suit the rapacity of my courtiers. What can a monarch do more than yield to the advice of his councillors?"

"Much," replied Elphenor, calmly; "he can resist, when aware that it is injudicious."

"It is so difficult—so impossible," said Constantine, irresolutely.

"Not impossible. With the will to do, and the spirit to dare, there is nothing that is impossible," answered Elphenor, firmly; for to the young monarch who stood before him, his words had ever been those of a parent. "Your majesty is right—it is well to listen, but not to all alike. Observe that stately vessel, as she glides upon the wave—how steady her course!—where would she be, did not one hand guide her on her trackless path? Noble prince, your empire is but as that vessel—let one hand guide the helm, and let that one be your own."

"It shall be so," exclaimed Constantine, fervently. "I have yielded too long—I will decide for myself. By the counsels of others, have I dallied even with the safety of my throne. The foe is almost at our gates before we have even thought on the means of arresting his progress. You know not perhaps," he continued in a lower tone, and bending towards the ear of Elphenor,

" that Mahomet is openly making preparations for war?"

" How?" said Elphenor, starting.

" Nay, more," continued the Emperor, sinking his voice almost to a whisper, " he dares to boast among his infidel courtiers, that he will seat himself on our throne of Constantinople, and give our Christian women for slaves to his unbelieving followers."

" I do beseech you majesty," said Elphenor, hurriedly, " is this indeed a truth, or merely a report from the idle?"

" A truth—a certainty. This very day, a secret messenger from Calil Pacha, the grand vizier of Mahomet, arrived in the city; he but stipulates for a certain sum, and promises information of all that takes place at Adrianople."

" Villain, and traitor," exclaimed Elphenor, bitterly; " but his information is precious. Your majesty has not revealed this news."

" To none, save to you, Elphenor. To you, as to my only true friend, have I turned in this hour of need. Be once more my adviser. The people love you. Under your guidance, the interests of

the empire will flourish, and blessings join the names of Constantine and Elphenor. Say then, that to-morrow you will resume your place in the council chamber."

"Your Majesty shall be obeyed," said Elphenor, slowly, as he gazed upon the excited countenance of the sovereign whom he loved as a son.

"'Tis well," exclaimed Constantine, joyously. "And now adieu:—and he wrung the hand of his early friend with all the fervour of a youthful affection, and calling to his attendant, hastened down the steps which led to the road.

"Is this prudent?" observed Elphenor, as he saw that the person who held the horse of the Emperor, was a young Greek page. "At this hour, alone!—oh, suffer me to attend your majesty to the city."

"Nay, there is no danger.—Cylon is faithful; and Kaled," patting the neck of his horse as he spoke, "is sure—would that I could say as much for all who await me in yonder city."

"May God protect your majesty!" replied Elphenor, solemnly; for the tone of sorrow which had betrayed itself in the parting words of the

Emperor, struck a chill into the heart of his hearer: but the young and thoughtless Constantine was already in his saddle, and waving his hand, soon the clattering of his horse's hoofs upon the hard road as he gallopped back towards the city, died away in the distance; and once more, Elphenor was alone.

## CHAPTER III.

One hour had scarcely elapsed since Elphenor had quitted the home where, for some time, his life had been spent in peaceful seclusion. He had risen from his studies a moody, discontented man; one hour had passed, and with it the sorrows which had so long weighed down his spirit, had vanished. His conscience was suddenly relieved—the wound in his affections had been healed—he was restored to the confidence of his sovereign and friend; and, above all, he perceived that the moment was at hand, when the project he had so strenuously advocated as essential to the welfare of his country, must be carried into effect. Thus far all appeared bright. Once again he would mingle with the world—again would his voice be heard in the councils of his country; and, by timely and unwearied exertions might that country be rescued from impending danger, and the empire restored to the glory of its former days. High thoughts

and bright visions filled the noble mind of Elphenor; and it was not till he turned his eyes towards his own home, that a pang of regret forced its way into a heart bounding with joy. The soft glimmer of a lamp from one of the windows told him, that in that lonely room there were fond eyes watching for his coming; and the spirit of Elphenor sunk, for he knew that the peace of that home was now broken—and for ever! His retirement had become dear—more dear than he had been aware of—for ever, while yielding to the fascination of domestic ties in the society of his beautiful Ida, the conscience of Elphenor had reproached him for his abrupt withdrawal from the important situation he had held at the court of the Emperor Constantine Paleologus. In a moment of disgust, at the vacillation of the Emperor, upon a point which had long been a subject of controversy, not only in the Greek empire, but throughout most of the Italian states—the union of the Greek with the Latin church—Elphenor had resigned his charge, and retired to live at the beautiful villa bequeathed to him by his father, to whom it had been granted by the munificence of the late Emperor John Paleologus.

It was now early in the summer of 1452—a period never to be forgotten in the annals of the Greek empire. Some time had elapsed since the voice of Elphenor had been heard in the councils of his royal pupil; but from that moment the bosom of Elphenor had known no rest. At his latest hour, the dying Emperor, aware of the almost childish indecision of character which formed so glaring a defect in the disposition of his son, had implored Elphenor never to withdraw himself from Constantine, but to treat him as if he were his own son; and Elphenor had promised. How had he performed that promise? It is true, that so long as his advice had been followed, he had disregarded the annoyances to which, owing to the envy and jealousy of the courtiers of Constantine, he was incessantly exposed: but the moment he was convinced that he no longer retained sufficient power over the mind of the Emperor to dissuade him from listening to the injudicious suggestions of others, he had retired from court; and, bidding adieu to the toil and tumult of political life, had devoted his whole time to the fulfilment of domestic duties, and the study of philosophy.

His house soon became the rendezvous of all that Constantinople boasted as most distinguished in art or literature; and these were not a few; for the well-known encouragement which Constantine had always bestowed upon them, had been the means of attracting great numbers from all parts of the world. They had eagerly left their homes, and settled in a city, where the revival of letters and encouragement of the arts were avowedly the predominant tastes of the young Emperor;—tastes which were speedily adopted by all who sought his favour.

The palaces and squares of the city were not only adorned with splendid works of art, but the private residences of all such as pretended to any rank or consequence among the nobles were highly ornamented, and filled with the most precious specimens of ancient and modern sculpture and painting; while the formation of libraries, and the search after curious manuscripts, were among the first objects of the learned and the great. In these pursuits, the Greek priests were particularly distinguished. The establishment of schools of philosophy and elocution had been one of the chief

cares of the late Emperor; and as the education of youth was at that time entirely confided to the Greek clergy, they had risen to be not only an opulent but a powerful body. To them it was not permitted, as to the Latins, to become soldiers in time of need, or to enliven the monotony of their lives by indulging in a variety of pursuits not forbidden to the Romans. The caloyers, or Greek priests, were remarkable for the austerity of their lives; yet, from being constantly immured within their colleges and monasteries, and subjected to one unbroken routine of study and devotion, too often degenerated into indolent and intolerant bigots. It is true that amongst them were some whose ardent and inquiring minds could ill brook the confinement of the cloister; and of these, many obtained permission from their patriarch to wander forth over the world, and spend their days in the search after, or diffusion of, knowledge. When a certain time had elapsed, they were bound to return to their home; and it had long been a matter of emulation amongst them, as to who should enrich the library of their college with the most precious books and manuscripts. In this manner, an invaluable store

of information constantly accumulated; and in the reign of Constantine it was his glorious boast, that within the walls of his city were collected more books and learned men than could be found in all the countries of the West. The Greeks were proverbially avaricious—the liberality of the Emperor well known, and the certainty of reward for the discovery of any valuable work in art or literature was, therefore, not a slight incentive towards industry of research. The popularity of a sovereign, who could as readily distinguish as recompense merit, was soon established; and the young and handsome Constantine was hailed by all classes, as the benefactor and ornament of his country. Acclamations, mingled with blessings, greeted him on every side; and as at first he prudently refrained from awakening the bigotry of his people, by attacking their prejudices, peace and happiness appeared to smile upon him, and promise him a long and a happy reign. A short time, however, had elapsed, ere a cloud gathered on the horizon of his hitherto bright existence; and it was during the retirement of Elphenor, that a

change took place in the position of Constantinople, which threatened serious consequences.

Amurath, the Sultan of the Turks, and the bitter enemy of the Greeks, had died; but, instead of the hoped-for cessation of anxiety and terror with which he had constantly overwhelmed the city of Constantinople, a foe still more fierce and implacable had arisen in the person of his son and successor, Mahomet II. From the moment of his accession to the throne, his words had been of peace, while the warlike preparations in which he was constantly engaged, left little doubt that the accomplishment of some long meditated project was not far distant. As his preparations advanced, so did the reserve which he had hitherto maintained disappear; and the bitter taunts which he began unsparingly to lavish upon the Greek empire, showed that it was not less to him, than it had been to his predecessors, an object of jealousy and dislike. As yet, he had refrained from any movement of hostility, and the easy and trusting spirit of Constantine had remained in repose; till at length aroused by some private

information, the Greek Emperor suddenly became alarmed, and starting from his fancied security looked around for the support which, in case of attack, the isolated position of his city must eventually render indispensable.

His first and most natural appeal for succour was to Rome. Rome, even then in her decline—alike destitute of treasure and of troops—Rome was still powerful. The halo of sanctity still surrounded the Holy See, and commanded the bigotry of many; and although the city of the Pope was herself too often forced to lean upon mercenary aid, yet whenever a foreign state entered upon any undertaking, the blessing of the Pontiff was still craved as in former days, and the countenance of his Legate relied upon, as giving weight to the power that was sanctified by his presence. Thus, decaying daily in physical resources, the church of Rome still continued to maintain a moral authority, which in many instances supplied the place of a more real power. At the period when the first alarm compelled Constantine to take some steps towards his own defence, Nicholas V. filled the papal chair. To him, as to a father, did the

Emperor reveal the situation of his affairs, imploring timely and sufficient aid to avert the coming storm. But his prayers were addressed to an unwilling ear. To Rome, the possession of Constantinople had long been a cause of distress and annoyance. Forgetting that the seat of her own empire had been transferred thither, Rome appeared to consider Constantinople as a mere colony. The indolence of the popes, and the avarice of the cardinals, blinded them to the necessity of cordially supporting their Greek brethren; and, wearied by the continual complaints and applications for money or support which they received from the Emperors of Constantinople, they had latterly manifested a cold indifference to the fate of a city in which their own was in reality so much involved.

The moral as well as the local situation of Constantinople presented features so peculiar, as to be in a great measure the cause of the embarrassment from which she so frequently suffered. The population was composed of two nations, differing in their habits, customs, and religion. The greater portion was Greek; but unhappily for the pro-

tection of the empire, the spirit of the Grecian warriors of old dwelt not in the breasts of their descendants. A people, composed chiefly of priests, merchants, and artisans, much as it may desire peace for the protection of its various interests, is the least calculated to secure it by affording the means of a vigorous defence in the hour of need. The Greeks counted few soldiers. Those who had been trained to arms, were only to be found among the Romans who made up the remainder of the population, together with some foreigners, chiefly Venetian and Genoese. The latter had established themselves in the suburb of Galata, forming a sort of colony dependent on the city. As their only avowed object was trade, their faith had been more than once doubtful; and Constantine felt that little reliance was to be placed upon men, whose very position without the walls might be an inducement to submission on the first approach of an enemy.

Under these circumstances, it should have been the policy of the Emperor of Constantinople ever to have maintained a perfect understanding with the Roman powers. Rome, the founder of the

city, should have been its protector; but, like an unnatural parent, in the hour of adversity, instead of compassionating the sorrows of her child, she hardened her heart against its cries, by dwelling on the faults that had led to its distress, and the annoyance they had caused to herself. How often do the vices or follies of one to whom the charge of a people has been committed, entail misery and ruin upon his successor! Constantine soon found that he had inherited, not only the empire, but the disadvantageous position in which the impolitic conduct of his predecessors had placed it; and the unsteadiness of purpose, which he had displayed upon the only occasion upon which he had been brought into connection with the Holy See, had revived and strengthened the prejudice with which Rome had been too long accustomed to regard Constantinople. Supported by the powerful and enlightened mind of Elphenor, Constantine had at once embraced the proposition of uniting the Greek and Latin churches; and his first trial of power had been an attempt to enforce the decree, which had been passed some years previously at the Council of Florence, authorising the union. Like his

father, the Emperor John Paleologus, Constantine had abandoned the attempt, terrified by the violence of the schism which arose, as it had done before, on the first mention of the contemplated union. By this one act of weakness, Constantine shook with his own hand the foundation of his empire.

All those, whose superior intelligence rendered them favourable to the proposed act of union (at the head of whom was Elphenor) withdrew from his councils; and the Emperor was left surrounded by a weak and interested faction, while he was overwhelmed by the reproaches which the Pope unhesitatingly lavished upon him. Under these circumstances, it is not to be supposed that the prayers of Constantine for succour were favourably received by the Holy See. In a paroxysm of rage, Nicholas V. refused even to admit the ambassadors of the Emperor.

" It was not," he said, " worth while attempting to avert the ruin, which would infallibly overwhelm the city that openly gave a preference to temporal over spiritual blessings."

How frequently does it appear that words spoken

in anger or in deep grief are prophetic ! Not many years elapsed, ere the proud Nicholas lay on his death-bed, mourning with bitter tears the sorrows he had foretold, and the harshness with which he had repulsed the prayer of the ill-fated Constantine ! At the time these words were spoken, danger was comparatively at a distance, and the pride of the angry Pontiff was gratified by the idea of the dependence to which he hoped to have reduced the city of Constantinople. The ambassadors of the Emperor quitted Rome, and returned to inform their anxious and perplexed sovereign of the ill success of their mission. Constantine was thunderstruck at the manner of their reception ; and although his conscience absolved him of intentional deception, he saw at once that his weakness upon the point which the Pope had so much at heart, was the cause of his contemptuous refusal of his demand. The high spirit of the young Emperor was roused by the affront, but his calmer judgment told him that resistance was useless. Submission and reconciliation with the Holy See must be his first object. His own empire was as it were in an enemy's country. In a moment he might be hemmed in on all sides ; and he

well knew his city did not possess within itself resources sufficient for its defence. Instant decision was therefore necessary, and the mind of the Emperor turned to him for whom his heart had so often yearned—the adviser of his youth—Elphenor.

So long as the quarrel between them could be deemed personal, so long had the pride of the monarch struggled with the affections of the friend; and though hourly desiring a reconciliation, he had allowed more than two years to elapse without having seized upon any opportunity which might, without a compromise of dignity on his part, have afforded a pretext for an adjustment of differences.

Now, the aspect of affairs had changed, and at once, by a noble effort, he cast aside personal considerations; and resolutely avoiding any consultation with those who might have endeavoured to dissuade him from such a step, he had secretly left his palace, accompanied only by Cylon, a young Greek slave whom he had rescued in battle and restored to freedom, and once more had taken the well-known road to the villa of Elphenor, his early friend, and the only one in whom he felt he could place unbounded confidence.

## CHAPTER IV.

THERE was much of joy mingled with regret, which filled the gentle bosom of Ida, on hearing of the sudden change in her existence, which would probably ensue from the interview between the Emperor and Elphenor. The love of Ida for her husband amounted almost to idolatry; and to a woman who really loves, it is ever a moment of rapture, when she perceives that the talents and noble qualities of the object of her tenderness are appreciated as they deserve. The education of Ida had not been superior to that of most ladies of her own rank; and in those days, though Italy as well as Greece could boast of some, whose extraordinary endowments and cultivation were esteemed an honour to their country; yet, in general, the education of women was then, very much as it is now, confined to the more superficial accomplishments that captivate, rather than to the more solid attainments of study calculated to strengthen and enlarge

the understanding. To sing; to dance the Romaika with grace; to excel in embroidery; and acquire a sort of airy eloquence in the recital of fables and Eastern tales, when grouped together under the shadow of the trees, were the chief accomplishments of the young and beautiful Greek ladies, who might often have been seen assembled in the gardens of Ida.

Beyond these studies, few were inclined to venture, until the rage for the productions of Petrarch had reached their happy shores. Then, indeed, sprang up the desire of imitation; and to emulate the Italian ladies in the recital of the verses of their gifted countryman, became the object of ambition to the lively Greeks, who vied with each other in the attainment of the language in which the sonnets were written. Some there were, who, having mastered the first difficulty, hesitated not to encounter others; and latterly more than once the lays of Provence might have been heard floating gaily on the twilight air, the perfumed breath of which scarcely a moment before had wafted over the wave of the Bosphorus the tender accents of Italian love.

In all these light and feminine accomplishments, Ida shone pre-eminent; but it was not the possession of them which had won for her the love of Elphenor. It was her gentleness, her sweetness of temper, and the noble rectitude of mind, which gave to her slightest thought something sublime and holy,—which had irresistibly attracted one, who, though unshackled by a vow, had ever contemplated marriage as a position totally incompatible with his grave and studious habits. Each day succeeding that upon which he had first called Ida by the name of wife, only tended to confirm his happiness; and the birth of a daughter seemed to leave to the delighted mother no wish ungratified. Yet, sometimes her smile would grow sad, and a look of anxiety overspread her features, as she gazed upon her husband's brow, and beheld the gloom which had latterly become more apparent there. Since his retirement from court, Elphenor had not once visited Constantinople. For several weeks, however, Ida knew that a more constant communication than formerly had been maintained between her husband and the friends he had left in the city; and many deep conferences had taken place within the walls

of the villa with some, who, though personally strangers to Ida, she knew at once to be grave and holy men. The nature of these mysterious meetings had not been revealed by Elphenor; and Ida forbore to question, when she perceived the painful impression they usually left upon the mind of her husband. The visit of the Emperor was immediately made known to her; and deeply as she felt that its effects must trench upon her private peace, the noble heart of Ida bounded at the idea of the reconciliation, which would prove to the world that the transcendant worth and talent of him she adored were duly appreciated by his sovereign.

On the following morning, with a glowing cheek, though tearful eye, Ida accompanied Elphenor to the confines of their little domain; and standing with Melanthe, her infant daughter, in her arms, she watched the receding form of her husband, as with his attendants he once more took the road to Constantinople, until, as he slowly disappeared from her view, tears of joy and pride fell fast from her eyes. Long did she linger upon the spot where she had received his farewell embrace; it seemed as if a new life was about to open to her

view; and she looked upon the beautiful scenery around, and upon every well-known object, with a jealous fondness, as if her heart foreboded a separation from all that had witnessed the perfection of happiness she had enjoyed upon that spot. In the mean time, Elphenor was advancing on his journey; and before Ida could rouse herself from the meditation into which this unlooked-for event had plunged her, he had once again entered Constantinople.

## CHAPTER V.

It wanted yet some time to the usual hour of the assembly of the Council of Constantine, when Elphenor, having arrived at the entrance of the Hippodrome, resigned his horse to the care of an attendant, and proceeded on foot to the imperial palace. One moment he paused, to gaze upon the beautiful city where he had dwelt so long, that each object upon which his eye rested seemed associated even with the years of his childhood. There, at the farther end of the arena, still stood the brazen column — the long-wished-for goal, towards which during many a race the eye of Elphenor had been strained. There, also, glittering in the bright sunlight, were the beautiful columns of green jasper, supposed to be unequalled in the world. They were ranged in a circle; and such was their towering height, that the colossal statues placed at intervals between them, appeared but the ordinary size of mortals; while, in the centre, stood the mysterious serpentine column,

round which in early days Elphenor had so often wandered, pondering upon the firmly-believed tradition of its being the identical column which had supported the tripod of Delphi, until, in the excitement of boyish superstition, he had sometimes feared to behold the three grisly heads of the monsters, whose twisted bodies formed the pillar, pour forth their separate streams of water, wine, and milk, as he had learned from the legends of old, had been the mode of their bearing testimony to the divinity of Apollo.

Elphenor smiled as the recollection of those light-hearted days shone across his mind; but the smile vanished, and a look of bitter sorrow replaced it, as his eye wandered over the splendours of his beloved city, and he felt that the foe was at its gates.

There could not have been a spot more favourably marked by nature for the site of a metropolis than that which was occupied by the city of Constantinople. A striking confirmation of this opinion existed in the fact of its having once before been chosen for the capital of a kingdom. Byzas, King of the Megareans, founded upon it a city, which from him took the name of Byzantium; and after

a great variety of vicissitudes, having fallen alternately into the hands of the Spartans, the Athenians, and the Romans, was annexed by Vespasian to a province. It was not, however, until the final struggle for the empire with Licinius, that the idea occurred to Constantine of founding a city upon the spot. Licinius had taken refuge in Byzantium; and during the siege, Constantine had full leisure to observe the advantages of the situation. Upon the fall of his rival, he determined at once to build a city of unequalled magnificence, and, by transporting his court thither, to make it the capital of the Roman Empire. Then rose up on all sides, as if by the wand of an enchanter, the splendid palaces and churches with which the Seven Hills still were crowned. To make his new seat of empire as nearly as possible resemble Rome, was the great object of its imperial founder, who even attempted to give it the name of "New Rome," but fate, or the gratitude of his people, decreed otherwise; and the name of Constantinople, which his subjects gave it in honour of their Emperor, took precedence of that which he had bestowed upon it, and has been preserved unchanged to the present day.

The stupendous work of creating a capital had

been the effort of a single mind; but it had been left to after-ages to complete and adorn what had been so nobly conceived and begun. Proud of their empire, the Roman Greeks had never spared either trouble or expense in the embellishment of their capital, and on all sides the eye rested upon the most exquisite works of art. Every country seemed to have contributed its most precious things; and, as Elphenor stood upon the eminence he had gained, and looked around, as if counting the treasures his beloved city possessed, there might have been seen not merely the gems of Greek and Italian industry, but among columns of porphyry and jasper, vases and statues of workmanship so exquisite, that each threw the last observed into shade. At a distance, arose the towering obelisk and pyramid; while gigantic forms of granite and basalt, grimly reposing far from their native shores, led the mind back to the dark lore of the Egyptians, and showed, as it were, by their stupendous proportions, how strong must have been the desire of the Christian emperors to embellish and enrich their city.

It was but for a moment that Elphenor contemplated these objects; yet in that moment ages of

the past seemed to roll over his memory, and with a shudder he pictured to himself what might be the fate of all that he then beheld. Far different were the prospects of the city now, from those of the day which saw him a wanderer from her walls; and with a bitter sigh of regret as he dwelt upon this idea, Elphenor quickened his pace, as if in haste to atone by his presence for the evil his long absence might have aggravated. Hurrying forward, he had already crossed the open space of the Hippodrome, and ascending the long flight of marble steps which led to the imperial palace, entered a gallery, where those who sought an audience of the Emperor were accustomed to wait until summoned to his presence. It was still early; and as it was the intention of Elphenor not to demand a private audience, lest, after his long absence it might leave the cause and manner of his return doubtful, he seated himself in one of the alcoves of the gallery, and drawing his mantle partly over his face, appeared lost in meditation. The gentle murmur of a fountain, alone broke the stillness of the spot; but in a few minutes several persons entered at the other end of the gallery;

and Elphenor, raising his eyes, scanned the group which immediately surrounded a large, dark looking man, whom he recognised as his old enemy, Luca Notaras, the Grand Admiral. He appeared at that moment as if in the act of disclosing some very important secret; his large heavy brows were compressed into an air of peculiar gravity; and, as he moved more towards the centre of the gallery, Elphenor could distinctly hear the conversation that ensued.

"And so the successor of Alessandro, the Grand Chamberlain, is to be declared to-day," exclaimed a small, thin man, on the right-hand of Notaras.

"I am so informed by His Majesty," replied the latter, with a profound inclination of the head.

"I hope, Signor Notaras, you will remember your promise to me," observed, significantly, the Signor Jacopo Doria, one of the chief of the Genoese merchants.

"Nay, the office of *protovestiare* should be held by one of us," interrupted the handsome young Greek, Demetrius of Ypsara; "you Italians are rich enough already," he added, with a laugh.

"The Chamberlain of the Emperor has always

boasted of a Roman lineage," replied Giulio Orsini, a haughty looking personage, who gazed upon the brilliant dress and smiling features of the young Greek Demetrius with ill-concealed disgust.

" Now by our holy mother," retorted Demetrius, " methinks it is a bad moment for any Roman to look for favour, after the ungracious reception poor Martino Vasario has been vouchsafed at Rome. I hope, Signor Giulio, you have not neglected to prevail on his Holiness to support your application for the Chamberlain's office."

" An Orsini needs but little support from others," observed Jacopo Doria, the Genoese, in a fawning tone; being inwardly convinced that the immense bribe the Grand Admiral had unhesitatingly accepted from him, would not fail of securing the appointment.

" Nay, we all need some support," exclaimed Carlo Ficino, the small, thin man, who had spoken first, and who was a rich Venetian goldsmith; " but of course," he added with more complacency, as he recollected he could boast of being connected with the family of the Doge, " a place of so much importance will only be entrusted to one of noble

birth. Poor Alessandro, few could boast of uniting so many advantages as he did in his own person;" and with an appealing look at the Grand Admiral, who was nearly related to the deceased Chamberlain, whom no one before had ever thought of praising, Carlo Ficino heaved a deep sigh.

"My friends," said the Grand Admiral, pompously, "I need not now inform you, that His Majesty has ever placed in me the most unbounded confidence."

"We all know that, Signor Notaras," replied several voices.

"At least, so you have told us very often before," boldly observed Demetrius, whose natural and somewhat rash gaiety of manner could not be subdued by the assumed importance of Notaras.

The grand admiral did not deign to reply otherwise than by a frown; and turning his eyes with a meaning look to the Genoese, whose gold he had received, continued—"You must be aware that it is His Majesty's most anxious desire that his old and attached allies of Genoa—and of Venice," he added, with a smile that was not lost upon

Carlo Ficino, "should ever be called to bear their part in all the great offices of state, though some evil-disposed persons have ventured to insinuate that a natural partiality for his fellow-countrymen of Greece, has sometimes weighed against the claims of the noblest of the Romans."

"I must confess, that I think His Majesty's appointments show a most impartial spirit," observed the Orsini, who, remarking the stress which Notaras had laid upon the last words, already fancied himself Grand Chamberlain.

"Yes, yes; we all know the Emperor is the most noble and generous prince on earth," exclaimed Demetrius; "a prince," he added, with enthusiasm, "worth living or dying for; so you have not told us any news, Signor Notaras: but since His Majesty has placed in you such *unbounded confidence*, perhaps he has informed you who is to be Grand Chamberlain; and if so, I pray, in the name of all, that you will relieve our curiosity."

The group of aspirants gazed with anxiety upon the face of Notaras; but the latter, provoked by the manner in which Demetrius had ventured to mimick his words, and unwilling to

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appear irritated at the folly of one whom he affected to consider as a boy, merely drew himself up, as he replied—

" I am much grieved that it is not in my power to afford the Signor Demetrius the information he seeks. Doubtless, His Majesty will declare his intention at this morning's council." So saying, he turned towards the upper end of the gallery, and placed himself close to the door through which it was usual to pass to the council-room; upon which several other persons, who had not ventured to address themselves to the little knot of favoured ones surrounding the Grand Admiral, advanced, and, in the murmur of general conversation which ensued, Elphenor could no longer distinguish a word.

He had, however, heard sufficient to inform him exactly of the state to which the absence of more worthy councillors had reduced the Emperor. The few, whose words he had overheard, were but a type of the many, who, in their factious and avaricious motives, entirely lost sight of aught, save personal aggrandizement; and he foresaw that a strong and steady hand alone could now restrain

the turbulence of those, to whom the safety of the state might ere long be committed. Occupied with these reflections, it had not occurred to Elphenor that his own position at that moment was rather perplexing. It had been his wish to mingle in the crowd at the time it was summoned to the presence of the Emperor, thus avoiding all question or remark:—but already the usual hour had passed, and still the doors of the council-chamber remained closed. Elphenor hesitated for a moment—but the fact of having unintentionally overheard the conversation of others, determined him no longer to remain unobserved amongst them; and rising from his seat, he had just advanced to the gallery, when an unusual bustle at the opposite end attracted all eyes, the imperial guard ranged themselves rapidly on either side of the door, and, preceded by his officers, Constantine entered the gallery.

The surprise, not unmingled with consternation, which this departure from the ordinary routine of proceedings excited, was visible upon every countenance; and the assembled courtiers instantly advanced, ranging themselves as they walked on

either side. Constantine, however, did not appear to see them. Hastily his eye scanned the bowing crowd; the face he sought was not among the many presented to his view, and a look of disappointment overspread his countenance; until, turning to the right, he beheld Elphenor standing almost close to him. A smile of delight instantly lighted up features, that, even in repose, were strikingly handsome; and pausing for a moment to accept the homage rendered to him by his former councillor, he held out his hand,—then leaning familiarly upon his arm, walked with him through the crowd, and placed him by his side at the head of the council table. Nothing could surpass the dismay which this unexpected event had too evidently produced amongst the ministers of the Emperor; but when Constantine, who knew well how to assume the dignity proper to his state, proceeded formally to declare to the members of his council, his intention of bestowing the much envied office of Grand Chamberlain upon Elphenor, the rage which swelled the bosoms of the disappointed aspirants, became almost uncontrollable.

Amongst them, no one was more filled with con-

sternation than the Grand Admiral himself; for, notwithstanding the hopes which he had continued to instil into the minds of others, until the last moment he had fully persuaded himself that the Emperor had yielded to his prayers, and was about to bestow the vacant place upon Alessandro Notaras, his only son. But the will of the Emperor was absolute; and a resolution thus declared at the council table, Notaras well knew was irrevocable. It was only when Constantine debated, and asked counsel, that any hope presented itself, that one of his moments of weakness was at hand; and Notaras stood too much in awe of the powerful mind of Elphenor, to venture an appearance of open opposition to him. He, therefore, during the time that the council lasted, contrived to repress all demonstration of the envy and anger with which his heart overflowed; and on quitting the chamber, no smile was more bland, no expressions more courteous, than those which met the eye and greeted the ear of Elphenor, from the lips of the wily Notaras.

Elphenor, though austere, was a man of polished address; and he replied to the endless congratula-

tions which assailed him on all sides, with the utmost graciousness of manner. It was only on great occasions he thought it necessary to be severe. His own interest, was a consideration of little moment; but for Constantine, his sovereign and his friend, his heart was susceptible of the most lively emotion; and the acute powers of discernment with which nature had gifted him, were doubly alive, when the interests of the Emperor were at stake.

The office of Grand Chamberlain at that time differed widely from the contemptible insignificance into which it afterwards sunk. A noble Greek or Roman would have thought himself for ever degraded, had the duties of this office resembled those of the present day; the real privileges which the situation conferred, were of a far higher order, and more nearly resembled those enjoyed by a prime minister. In some respects, however, it differed materially. With a monarch whose will was arbitrary, all consultation with his ministers was of course voluntary on his part; and though, since the accession of Constantine, the form of a council had been instituted, yet it was

not unusual that some sudden change of purpose took place; and it was then the duty of the Chamberlain to convey the wishes of the Emperor to the proper authority, and to hold himself responsible for their execution.

It was also necessary that the person who filled the office of Chamberlain, should be perfectly acquainted with the manners and customs of other nations—their language, form of government, and the resources of which they were capable; and this not only as far as the allies of the Emperor were concerned, but all those countries with which it had been brought, or was likely to come into contact. To preserve the correspondence with foreign powers, and register in the archives of the empire every event worthy of record, was another duty of the Chamberlain; and it may be supposed that the person who was intended to fill the office, was naturally sought for amongst the most intelligent, and educated men of an age, when the thirst for learning was at its height.

Added to this, the Chamberlain alone had his residence in the imperial palace, where a numerous retinue was appointed for his use. He also had

the right of access at all hours to the royal presence; and no appointments or rewards could be bestowed without his sanction and his seal. It is not surprising that a post, uniting so many advantages, should have been eagerly sought after, or the arduous duties it imposed forgotten; or that in the short interval which had elapsed since the death of the last Grand Chamberlain, the secret hope which animated every breast of obtaining the vacant place, had rendered the court of Constantine one continued scene of underhand intrigue.

## CHAPTER VI.

The first decision of the Emperor was one which by no means accorded with the wishes of Elphenor. It was to send ambassadors to Rome and to Adrianople. The object of the mission to Rome was to solicit anew the interference of the Pope; and, in order more fully to convince his Holiness of the good faith and true spirit of submission in which the promise was made, Constantine had instructed his envoy to declare, that the long deferred project of the union of the two churches should be immediately carried into effect, if the Pope would openly sanction the act, by sending a legate to Constantinople, to be present during the religious ceremony by which the union would be consummated. By this timely act of submission, the Emperor hoped to secure the appearance at least of that protection from the Holy See, which he knew, in the event of his being placed in

a situation of difficulty, would materially influence many of his allies in their conduct towards him.

In thus calculating, the good sense of Constantine had enabled him to form a just opinion; but the judicious policy of this step was more than counterbalanced by the extraordinary determination with which he adhered to his plan of also sending an ambassador to the court of his powerful, though not yet openly avowed enemy, Mahomet II. It was a difficult and a dangerous undertaking; and in vain Elphenor endeavoured to dissuade the Emperor from adopting it. No act of sufficient hostility to warrant reprisals had as yet taken place between the Greeks and the Ottomans. To ask for peace, where war had not been declared, was palpably an injudicious measure; yet such was the anxiety of the Emperor to avert, if possible, the storm which he felt was gathering round him, that he could not rest, and eagerly caught at the first occasion which presented itself, of opening a negotiation with the Sultan; vainly hoping, that if no other benefit resulted from the measure, he might at least ascertain the real feelings of the Ottoman court towards himself, and also discover

whether the reports which had lately reached him, of the extent of the warlike preparations of Mahomet, were well founded.

Some depredations of a serious nature had been committed by the Turkish soldiery upon the inhabitants of a small Greek village adjoining Constantinople. All redress having been refused by the Ottoman general, Constantine resolved to profit by the opportunity, and send a messenger to Mahomet, demanding an investigation of the affair; and at the same time offering a renewal of all the promises of friendship and goodwill which, notwithstanding the secret designs of the Sultan, had been constantly interchanged between him and the Emperor.

With unshaken firmness Constantine persevered in this scheme, although secretly forced to admit that the step was hazardous; but such was the importance he attached to its success, that he selected Elphenor as his ambassador. Elphenor, however, better informed than his sovereign as to the real disposition of the Sultan, immediately set before Constantine the danger he was about to provoke, and the advantage which Mahomet would not

fail to reap from this display of weakness. All was unavailing. The measure had long been a favourite scheme of the Emperor; and, from the determination of his manner, Elphenor fearing that if he were positively to decline the embassy, it would be entrusted to one perhaps less fervently devoted to the interests of his country, reluctantly accepted a commission, from which he judged too truly that little benefit could result. Such was the feverish impatience of Constantine for the realization of his hope of extorting from the Sultan some concession, or promise, which might secure peace between them, that he insisted upon the immediate departure of Elphenor for Adrianople, where the Sultan then resided; and preparations were instantly begun, in order to arrange and adorn the gorgeous train by which the ambassador of the Emperor was to be accompanied.

The will of an absolute monarch is as the touch of a magician's wand. In a short time, a magnificent retinue was prepared. Gifts from the royal treasure were selected as suitable offerings to the barbarians they were intended to appease; and the armoury of the Imperial palace rendered up all

that was most precious and dazzling within its walls, to adorn the troops which were to serve as the escort. In three days all was completed, as if by enchantment; and from the throne in the Hippodrome, from whence the emperors were accustomed to behold the celebration of the public games, in the magnificence of which Constantinople still stood unrivalled, Constantine now looked down, with an almost childish delight, upon the splendid cavalcade which was to set forth the following morning; but which first, by his orders, displayed its grandeur to the eyes of the admiring citizens, who flocked in crowds to view the procession as it passed along the open space of the Hippodrome.

Though grievously decayed from its ancient state, Constantinople still boasted of treasures of inestimable value; and all were now lavished by the anxious Constantine, in the futile hope that the magnificence of the embassy might convey a false estimate of the resources his empire afforded. The cavalcade which was to accompany Elphenor, resembled more the triumphant bands of a conqueror, than the train of a suppliant for redress and justice.

The march was opened by a troop of cavalry, in armour of Milan steel richly inlaid with gold. The bridles of the horses were heavily embossed with the same metal, which also glittered upon their light and beautiful breast-plates of chain armour. At the head of the troop rode the officers, mounted on superb steeds, also equipped for war; and with accoutrements of the most costly description. These were followed by a band of foot soldiers, who in their turn were succeeded by two rows of chariots, containing the musicians belonging to the Imperial palace, who kept up a succession of martial airs during the procession. After the musicians had past, the secretaries and physicians appeared, with the other officers who were to accompany the ambassador, all splendidly mounted and accoutred. Behind these, and distinguished by the simplicity of their attire, rode four of the chief of the holy men of Constantinople; two wore the habit of the Caloyers, and the other two were Latins.

But the chief attraction of the gay crowd that lined the Hippodrome to view the procession, seemed to be the magnificent horses which had

been taken from the Imperial stables, to swell the grandeur of the train. They were of the noble race which had been obtained at so much cost from the plains which lie at the foot of the Mount Argæus; a race so highly prized, that a celebrated rebel chief had been ransomed, and restored to his liberty and estates, by a sacrifice of some horses of the true Palmatian breed.

These horses, which were matchless for their splendid proportions and surpassing speed, were reserved solely for the Emperor and the imperial games; no subject was allowed to procure them, even from their own country, without informing his sovereign, who instantly commanded the purchase of the animal at any price, and thereby secured to himself the exclusive possession of the breed. Constantine was more proud of these animals than of any of his treasures; upon no other occasion had they ever formed a part of the retinue of any one save the Emperor himself; but having heard of the extreme value which the Sultan attached to this breed of horses, the Greek Emperor could not resist the temptation of displaying their beauty to the admiring eyes of the Infidels, and at

once decided that they should form part of the pageant, by which he hoped to delude the enemy into a belief of his wealth and resources.

Each horse was led by two grooms in the imperial livery. In order the better to display the extraordinary power and beauty of their form, they did not wear the deep embroidered housings which were used on state occasions; but only a light harness and bridle, from which depended two long reins, which were held on either side by the grooms. A plume of the most brilliantly coloured feathers was fastened upon their foreheads, sparkling, as well as the narrow harness which defined their shape, with innumerable jewels; while their long and flowing manes were confined at intervals by knots of precious stones and long pear-shaped pearls. Ten of these magnificent animals preceded, and as many followed the car of state which contained Elphenor. A column of infantry closed the brilliant procession; and a variety of attendants, tent-bearers, sumpter horses, and mules, brought up the rear, which was guarded by another small body of cavalry.

Never, even in those days, when the state consi-

dered the glory of its ambassador as its own, had so gorgeous a train departed from the walls of any city; and when the inhabitants of Constantinople beheld the magnificence of their Emperor, their love of show overcame all the feelings of anger with which his attempt to interfere with their religion had filled them, and a simultaneous shout arose from the countless multitude who lined the great arena, and thousands of voices invoked blessings on their sovereign, and offered up prayers for his success.

Nor was the name of Elphenor forgotten. The dignity of his virtue had endeared him to all who had the interest of their country sincerely at heart, and his recal to power was hailed by them as a good omen. The jealousy of individuals was lost in the general gladness, and the heart of the amiable and well-intentioned monarch bounded with joy, as he marked the favourable reception of him whom he loved as a father. On that day, all appeared to smile upon the sanguine Constantine; and retiring to his palace, after the bright pageant he had witnessed had dispersed, he gave himself up to hopes of the future, which, alas! only borrowed their lustre from the sunshine of his own breast.

Not so Elphenor! Having at length escaped from the wearisome display, which he looked upon as the vain gilding of a sepulchre, he had hastened to quit the city, from which his final departure was fixed for the next day, and seek a moment's solace in the retirement of his own home, and the presence of his beloved Ida. Too truly had the heart of Ida foreboded that sorrow and anxiety would mingle in her portion of the destiny in which, by his reconciliation with the Emperor, Elphenor must necessarily be involved. Three days had elapsed without any tidings from Constantinople having been received at the villa. Was she, then, so soon forgotten? It was the first time the heart of Ida had asked the question; for it was the first time since her marriage that she had felt unhappy; and as if the sense of separation from her husband made her cling still more fondly to her child, she had scarcely left the cradle in which Melanthe reposed. Oppressed by a vague sense of danger and of fear, she had continued to watch even during the night; but it was not until the evening of the third day, as she was sitting beside her treasure, her pale face bowed upon her hands, that Elphenor entered the room.

Ida sprang from her seat, and, without speaking, buried her head upon the breast of her husband, as she clasped her arms round him. There was in that mute embrace such eloquence of love—such tenderness and truth, that it touched Elphenor more than the most passionate professions of attachment could have done. He felt that his absence had been mourned,—the moments counted until his return; and, as he pressed the loving form that twined around him still closer to his heart, it swelled with sadness, for he knew that his first words would bring tears to those eyes he dared not look upon in sorrow. In a few moments Ida raised her head, and leaning back upon the arm which encircled her waist, she looked up in the face of her husband with a trembling smile, as she said,—

"You will not leave me again, Elphenor?"

"Alas!" replied Elphenor, "would that it were possible for me to remain:—but it cannot be; this day—this very hour, we must part again. Nay, weep not," he added quickly; "do not weep, my beloved Ida. It is the Emperor's command. You would not wish that I should falter in my duty."

" That you could never do," said Ida, proudly. " I spoke in haste. But I have been so wretched in your absence. Why must we part?"

" I will tell you all," replied Elphenor; " and you will be the first to say, ' Elphenor has been right.' "

And when Elphenor had related the circumstances which had occurred, and the motives which had led to his acceptance of the office which must for a time separate him from his home, the murmurs of Ida were hushed. Once convinced, she no longer urged him to remain; but her tears only flowed the faster.

## CHAPTER VII.

The following morning, Elphenor departed upon his mission. The journey to Adrianople was to occupy several days, and many were the imprecations called forth from the younger portion of the officers who formed the suite of the Ambassador, by the slow and stately mode of travelling, necessitated by so large and cumbersome a train. Among the most impatient of those who longed to endeavour to penetrate the mysteries of an Ottoman city, was the young Greek Demetrius of Ypsara. By the frank and spirited expression of his devotion and attachment to his sovereign, which had been unintentionally overheard by Elphenor in the gallery of the Imperial palace, Demetrius had so won upon his affections that he had been appointed one of the chief officers who were to accompany the Ambassador to Adrianople. Great was the jealousy which this preference had at first occasioned; for Deme-

trius had but just attained the age of manhood; and from the extreme beauty of his person, and consequent attention to his dress and equipments, was looked upon by those not so bountifully endowed by nature as a mere boy, totally unfit for any situation of importance. But the eye of Elphenor had more discernment, and he soon discovered in the young Greek symptoms of a noble heart and undaunted courage; and urged on by the sympathy which one fine nature instantly conceives for another, he had not hesitated to place Demetrius at once in a situation of confidence and honour. Each succeeding hour of their acquaintance, served to confirm the good impression which the young man had made upon Elphenor; and during the tedious days of their progress to the city of the Sultan, the harassed mind of the Ambassador seemed to repose with delight upon the freshness of thought and feeling which, in the fallen and depraved state of intellect which pervaded the Greeks of that day, so eminently distinguished Demetrius from his slavish and money-loving countrymen.

"Had all who call themselves the sons of Greece, thy honesty and thy spirit," said Elphenor to him-

self, " then, indeed, the powers of the fierce Mahomet would have little terror for the empire of the East!" And Elphenor looked mournfully on the glowing countenance of the noble youth who rode by his side, and listened to the ardent aspirations and generous hopes which broke from his lips, as he spoke of the high renown it was his ambition to obtain, and the glories of the empire, when it should have forced the haughty Sultan to submission, until he almost longed to have been able to exchange the deep foresight which his own learning and experience had given him for the happy confidence with which the joyous nature of unpractised youth looked forward to the uncertain future.

On the evening of the sixth day of their journey, Elphenor, with his train, found themselves within a short distance of Adrianople; and the Ambassador having commanded that the usual preparations should be made for passing the night, proceeded, as was customary upon such occasions, to dispatch a messenger to the Grand Vizier, informing him of the approach of the Ambassador from the Emperor, and demanding an audience of the Sultan.

Calil Pacha, for so the Grand Vizier was named,

received this information as he was leaving his own palace to attend the summons of the Sultan; affecting surprise and consternation, he hastened to the Royal presence, and prostrating himself as one in the most abject fear, revealed the audacity, as he was pleased to call it, of a handful of Christians thus daring to present themselves at the Court of the Sultan of the Universe!

Little did Mahomet imagine that the news which Calil Pacha pretended to announce in fear and trembling, as an event totally unexpected, had been known to him from the very hour when the bright array of the procession had passed before the eyes of the Emperor Constantine. For some time, the traitorous Vizier had been in close correspondence with the Christians; and it was not without secret misgivings that he had learned the sudden determination of the Emperor to send an embassy to the Sultan. He trembled lest any accident might divulge his treasonable and underhand proceedings, to which in fact the measure of the Emperor might be in a great degree attributed, for the intense anxiety displayed by the Vizier to establish a good understanding with the Christians had led Constan-

tine into a false belief of the opinion entertained at the Ottoman Court of the power and resources of Constantinople.

If Calil professed this belief, it was not participated in by the superior mind of his Sovereign. Mahomet saw not through the eyes of his Vizier. Better informed as to the actual state of the empire, no sooner did he hear of the magnificent appointments with which the Christian Ambassador had arrived, than he instantly penetrated the shallow device, and exclaiming, " They have come to us like lions, but we will receive them like foxes," he gave orders that the most sumptuous preparations should be made for the reception of the Christian Ambassador and his train.

A palace was assigned for the dwelling of Elphenor; and some of the chief officers of the Sultan were commanded always to be in readiness, to show every attention to the strangers that was consistent with Turkish etiquette. An early day was named for the audience of the Ambassador; and even the Grand Vizier was deceived by the unusual tone of condescension which his sovereign had suddenly adopted towards his enemies.

The mind of Calil misgave him. Being constantly engaged in some intrigue for his own profit, he naturally distrusted the motives of others. Though Mahomet, who was unequalled in the art of dissembling, had always appeared to confide in him, the Vizier lived in a state of perpetual fear. He could not forget that, upon the abdication of Amurath, the father of Mahomet, in favour of his son, he had strongly opposed the coronation of that young prince, who had no sooner been crowned than he found Calil Pacha the most devoted of his slaves; but that when, a short time afterwards, it had pleased the former Sultan to emerge from his retirement, and remount his throne, Amurath had met with a strenuous supporter of the scheme in the person of the Grand Vizier. Although, in the double part he had played between the father and the son, he had merely consulted his own interest, and had not been actuated by ill-will towards Mahomet, Calil never fancied himself safe in the presence of his sovereign; and if a frown darkened the brow of the Sultan, the unfortunate Vizier became paralyzed with fear. He had amassed enormous riches, and would at any moment have

deserted to the Greek Emperor, could he have made terms sufficiently advantageous to himself. His surprise at the mode of reception vouchsafed by the Sultan to Elphenor was very great; but lest he might in any way be suspected of favouring the Christians, he affected to deliver the sentiments of his master as totally differing from his own; and in the first interview which he had with the Ambassador, he did not fail to reproach the servants of the Emperor for having ventured to insist upon the justice of their claims to redress, and unsparingly bestowed upon their whole nation those terms of reproach and vilification which were the customary offering of the Turks to those whom they affected to despise.

The true disposition of Calil was perfectly known to Elphenor, and he therefore quietly submitted to the treatment of the Grand Vizier, resolving not to hold communication upon matters of importance with any one but the Sultan himself.

The day which had been appointed for the audience of the Ambassador at length arrived, and he was ushered, with all the usual ceremonies, into the august presence of the Sultan. Never before

had anything so dazzling met the eye of Elphenor. The walls of the room which Mahomet had selected as his audience chamber, were of mother-o'-pearl, inlaid with gold, and precious stones of every colour; and whatever portion of the floor was left uncovered by the rich Persian carpets, appeared to be composed of lapis lazuli and porphyry, curiously inlaid with ivory and malachite, forming the most beautiful borders of arabesque design. The steps which led to the throne of the Sultan were all of ivory and gold; and the divan and cushions with which the room was surrounded were of the richest stuffs, brocaded with gold and silver.

The throne, upon which sat the Sultan, together with his own dress, were of a splendour which cast all surrounding objects into the shade; and even the canopy of crimson velvet above his head, was fringed with a deep border of jewels, and looped up in front with a massive chain of diamonds, above which sparkled a crescent, the light of which was so brilliant, that it dazzled the eyes of the beholders. Yet, amidst all this gorgeous display, one object alone seriously arrested the anxious eye of Elphenor. It was the glorious face

and form of the young Sultan, before whom the world had already began to tremble.

Mahomet was at this time just two-and-twenty, and presented in his person a splendid specimen of manly beauty. Tall, and finely proportioned, with an air of majesty and command, which, in the meanest attire, would have distinguished him from all others, he had also been gifted with features of the utmost regularity. To those habituated to the usual cast of countenance among the Ottomans, the expression of the face of Mahomet must have been singularly striking. It never for a moment assumed the perfect stillness, which, from being so generally adopted, appears a national characteristic of the Turks. Even when silent, the fine dark eyes of the Sultan appeared to dilate and contract, as though an after-thought had suggested consideration of some step which he at first had meditated; and then the half smile, which, for an instant, had revealed teeth of the most pearly whiteness, would settle down to a look of the sternest determination. But it was in speaking that the extraordinary powers of expression in the countenance of Mahomet more particularly developed themselves, and

the rapid changes which passed over it would have embellished the plainest features.

There were moments, however, when the stoutest heart trembled to look upon that face: moments, when the bitter scowl of ferocious passion showed that the unbridled spirit was at work within, and like the tempest-cloud struggling athwart the sky, foretold darkness and death! The extraordinary genius and acquirements of Mahomet had not left him in ignorance of any of the points of his own character; and although he never hesitated to practise the blackest arts of treachery and deceit, when they suited his purpose, yet so well aware was he of the policy of the appearance of honour and good faith, that he could at any time assume the semblance of honesty when convinced that his interests required it.

The character of this extraordinary man was the more striking, from being in many respects totally at variance with that of his own nation. The Turks were proverbial for profound ignorance and passive indifference. Mahomet, on the contrary, was susceptible of the most lively emotions. Restless and active, nothing escaped his observation;

and a just decision upon the most important points, with him was the work of an instant. In an age when reading and writing were almost unattainable accomplishments, even to the noblest of the land, Mahomet was not only thoroughly versed in the literature of his own country, but wrote and spoke with fluency seven or eight foreign languages. From his earliest years he had betrayed an insatiable thirst for knowledge—a just appreciation of all that was most sublime, whether in literature or the arts, and to be considered a patron of learning was to him an object of ambition.

With all these claims to admiration, the character of Mahomet was stained by vices of the deepest dye. He was cruel even to the most barbarous ferocity, false, sensual, and blasphemous; whilst he indulged in childish superstition. The acuteness of his mind very soon revealed to him the fallacies and impostures of the Mahomedan creed, while, in order to maintain a firmer hold over the mind of his people, he ever appeared the most zealous of the followers of the Prophet, performing his ablutions with scrupulous exactness,—avoiding the use of wine,—and minutely fulfilling every duty, which

was practised by the most rigid Mussulman. By this profound hypocrisy, he could deceive the multitude; but an intellect like that of Mahomet, could not be convinced by forms; and the result of the utter contempt in which he held the religion he professed, was an equal disbelief in all others. Had the marvellous powers of mind which he possessed been enlightened and directed by Christianity, there is no doubt that Mahomet would have been a good as well as a great prince; but amidst the darkness of Mahomedanism, those very powers only served as incentives to the deeds of atrocity by which his career was stained, owing to the advantages the superiority of his intellect, released from all restraint, enabled him to take over the rest of mankind.

Such was the Prince before whom Elphenor now stood; and it needed but one fiery glance of the young despot to convince those upon whom it turned, that any attempt to trifle with, or impose upon him, would be vain. Upon this occasion, however, the necessity for dissembling was upon his side. To beguile and amuse the Greek Emperor with fair words and promises, until his own prepa-

rations for war were further advanced, was the first object of the wily Mahomet. With a smile of the utmost benignity he received the address of Elphenor; but when the interpreter of the latter, according to the usual custom, was proceeding to translate the message of the Ambassador into the Turkish tongue, the Sultan by a hasty gesture stopped his speech; and at once with the greatest ease and fluency delivered his answer in the language used by Elphenor, accompanying his words with gestures full of grace, and a tone of condescension which filled the heart of the latter with dark forebodings.

Nothing could exceed the surprise of all the attendant officers of state at this unwonted reception of the Greek Ambassador. Hitherto, they had been accustomed only to the usual mode of audience, which was discourteous in the extreme, the Sultan generally sitting as though he did not understand one word of what was said to him; and after it had been explained by the interpreter, merely vouchsafing a few syllables, in a tone of offended dignity. The sudden change in the manner of their sovereign was most unaccountable; but to the grand Vizier it was perplexing to such a degree, that to

repress all outward sign of the agony of mind he endured, was impossible.

Calil Pacha was a thick, short man, with a smooth, red face, and scanty grizzled beard. He squinted slightly with both eyes; but, when excited, this defect became painfully apparent. Turkish etiquette forbids the slightest demonstration of emotion of any kind, in the presence of the Sultan. Though versed by long experience in all the arts of courtly deception, the unfortunate Vizier no sooner perceived that by the present disposition of his master towards the Greeks, not only his own avaricious views might be destroyed, but also that there was imminent danger of his traitorous practices being brought to light, than all presence of mind seemed to abandon him. He remained in his place trembling from head to foot; his eyes turned with the most horrible squint towards every person present, and the perspiration fell in large drops from his beard. He was very asthmatic, and in his efforts to restrain the inclination to cough, which his hurried breathing provoked, his face assumed almost a purple hue, and with lips apart he gasped for breath.

Once only the eye of the Sultan fell upon him. Fortunately the glance was not repeated, or the agitated Vizier must have sunk to the ground. Mahomet, whose eagle eye detected the smallest change of countenance in those around him, had instantly marked the confusion of Calil, and as instantly determined not to provoke the observation of others, by appearing to notice it, reserving for some future opportunity the heavy punishment to which he destined his victim, should he find his suspicions of his fidelity realized. At that moment, however, Calil was useful; and the mind of Mahomet was too full of the grand enterprise he meditated, to allow him to occupy himself with minor details.

His first object was, if possible, to delay the return of Elphenor to Constantinople, and, to effect this, he made use of a singular device. As soon as he had received the message of the Emperor, and replied to it in the most gracious words, he communicated to Elphenor a wish he had long entertained, and which from its trifling nature he felt assured would readily be granted by Constantine. This was—the cession of a very

small portion of land upon the shores of the Bosphorus, within a few miles of the city of Constantinople. To the exact situation of the spot he appeared indifferent; and upon observing the hesitation of Elphenor, ere he replied to this extraordinary demand, the Sultan unbound the splendid shawl which girded his waist, and throwing it on the floor declared his willingness to accept of even as small a portion of land as could be covered by that shawl, in order, as he said, to be able to place even a stool where he might sometimes sit to enjoy the beauty of the scenery for which the environs of Constantinople were so celebrated.

Elphenor plainly saw that some meaning of terrific import lurked beneath the apparent simplicity of this prayer. He instantly replied, that to grant or refuse such a request was not within the limits of the powers with which he had been entrusted by his Sovereign;—that the wishes of the Sultan should be forthwith conveyed to the Emperor of the Greeks;—and that he himself would await at Adrianople the return of his messenger. This was exactly what Mahomet desired; and im-

mediately after the customary exchange of presents had been made, he broke up the audience, and retired to his palace, well pleased with the advantage which he felt he had obtained.

## CHAPTER VIII.

It was at the delicious hour of sunset, when the fair Chezmé, daughter of Calil Pacha, the Grand Vizier, quitted the walls of her father's palace to enjoy the freshness of the air on the banks of the river Maritza, which flowed at the bottom of the garden. Wrapped in her silver veil she proceeded alone to the kiosk which had been built expressly for her, in the most retired and shaded spot of that beautiful garden. Surrounded by a thick screen of cypress and laurel, though in the bosom of the city of Adrianople, her retreat was completely secluded, for even the bank which sloped gradually down to the deep and rapid river, was thickly planted with trees and odoriferous shrubs, and bounded by a high balustrade of marble, which bid defiance to the curiosity of such, as gliding by in their light caiques, might have been tempted to pry into the secrets of the harem of the Vizier.

The maiden, who now entered the kiosk, or summer house, situated in the midst of the garden, was the only daughter of Calil Pacha; and from the fierceness of her temper, and her imperious disposition, had obtained so complete a dominion over her weak and unprincipled father, that she enjoyed a liberty and absence of control, far beyond that which was permitted to the other inmates of the harem, or to Turkish women in general. The room in which she seated herself on entering the kiosk, was raised a few steps from the ground; and owing to this circumstance, commanded a better view of the garden and river. The roof was in the form of a cupola, and was supported by marble columns, of which a second row formed as it were the outward walls of the building. A gilded lattice work filled up the space between the pillars, and being covered outside with a variety of fragrant creepers, presented a wall of flowers impervious to the view of those who stood without. The lattice could only be opened from the inside; and in several places the roses and jessamines were carefully twined aside, so as to leave full space for the view of the fair occupants of the apartment. A large marble foun-

tain played in the middle of the room; the choicest singing birds, confined in aviaries of golden wire in different parts of the garden, filled the air with their sweet warbling; while the glow of an Eastern sunset tinged every flower with a still brighter hue than it was wont to wear.

Yet the lady who looked upon this scene of enchantment marked not its brightness—perhaps the small and jewelled mirror which she held in her hand, and not unfrequently consulted, had revealed to her that a tinge of a still warmer hue than that of the declining day lingered on her own cheek. As she leant back upon her cushions, she threw off the veil, whose gossamer weight seemed too oppressive for one evidently labouring under deep emotion. Once again she raised the little mirror, which was suspended to her girdle by a row of amber beads. A smile of complacency hovered on her lips. Every art that could be summoned to the aid of much natural beauty, had that day been put in requisition by the fair handmaids of Chezmé. The countless braids of her long black hair nearly reached her feet; on one side of her head she wore a small cap of crimson, flowered with gold

and silver, from which hung, almost upon her shoulder, a splendid tassel of rubies and diamonds. A heron's plume was gracefully placed on the other side, and fastened by several bodkins of gold, the heads of which were composed of jewels of a magnificent size and lustre. Her drawers were of pale amber damask, flowered with silver; the same material had been employed for the caftan, which fitted closely to her shape; the sleeves of the caftan were clasped with sapphires. Her waistcoat was of violet satin, sewn with pearl; and the light white gauze *chemise* which, though drawn carefully over her bosom, perfectly revealed the smallest of the blue veins which now seemed to swell with uncontrollable emotion, was buttoned with large emeralds and diamonds. Slippers of white satin with the most delicate gold embroidery, and a girdle enriched with jewels, completed the magnificent costume in which the fair Chezmé hoped to accomplish the unhallowed wish of engaging the affections of a stranger and a Christian.

Happily for her she was the Vizier's daughter—no other dared to have contemplated such a scheme; and even Chezmé ever and anon cast a

glance of terror upon the blue wave of the Maritza, as she recollected that a dreadful death beneath its rolling waters might, notwithstanding her power, be even to her, in the event of discovery, the fearful alternative of success. The consciousness of authority soon restored her self-possession; and as she marked the slanting sunbeam which told of the declining day, a look of anger and scorn chased away the expression of anxiety her countenance had hitherto worn. She rose from her seat, and stamping her foot upon the marble floor, hurried up and down the room, peeping out from every quarter through the flowery screens, and sometimes tearing away with a glance of fury, and dashing upon the floor the beautiful roses and jessamine which impeded her view. But all without was silent and solitary; not a sound, save the sweet note of the birds, met the anxious ear of Chezmé, who, at length frantic with impatience and vexation, which appeared every moment to increase, snatched up her silver veil, and hastily wrapping it round her, retraced the path which led to the palace, and entered her own apartments in the harem.

An old female black slave, whose hideous

features attempted to soften themselves into an expression of interest as she looked upon the disturbed countenance of Chezmé, addressed a few words to her as she passed the portals of the harem; and following her to her room, busily employed herself in arranging the cushions upon which her young mistress threw herself with an air of fatigue. Upon a sign from her, the old woman clapped her hands, and there immediately entered from the lower end of the room, twenty of the most beautiful young girls it was possible to behold. They were all richly dressed, but without jewels, for they were slaves of the imperious Chezmé, who now ordered them to dance and to sing for her amusement.

The room in which they were assembled was paved with marble of various colours, and the walls glowed with the brightest flowers enamelled on china of Japan. The ceiling of wood was also richly painted and gilt, and two fountains threw up streams of perfumed water, which fell into marble basins at the lower end of the room. The upper end was raised by steps, upon which ran a divan, or sofa, the cushions of which were

of gold and silver brocade; but those which the officious black slave had placed beneath the head of Chezmé were of white and blue satin with embroidery of gold and silk. A slave kneeling on either side fanned her gently with large flat fans of peacocks' feathers, perfumed with sandal wood and attar of roses. By degrees, the irritation which she had at first displayed, began to subside; and the tender and languid movements of the dancers as they glided before her, accompanied by music of the softest description, gradually soothed her passion. The fire of her bright black eyes became subdued, their long lashes drooped upon her cheek, as, with her head thrown back and lips half parted, she reclined upon her cushions until, lulled by the perfumed atmosphere and sweeter sounds, a gentle state of repose stole over her wearied spirit.

But Chezmé was not asleep—bright visions of hope flitted before her half-closed eyes—a home in a distant land—a land of liberty and love, with one as graceful and young as him on whom her whole soul was fixed, was the waking dream of the Vizier's daughter, whose superior intelligence and

aspiring soul loathed the confinement of the harem, and the prejudices to which she, although its queen, was a slave as abject as the meanest of those whose very lives depended on the breath of her own caprice. She did not sleep, though she dreamed—the happy dream of escaping from that fate to which she well knew the avarice and ambition of her father destined her; for the Vizier never neglected any opportunity of advancing his interests, and his design with regard to his daughter had not escaped her penetration.

As yet the Sultan had but one wife. He had married the daughter of an Emir (Solyman), a gentle, helpless girl, who trembled even beneath his smile. The haughty spirit of Chezmé was fitted to rule a monarch, and the crafty Calil only waited for a favourable opportunity to endeavour to accomplish his scheme. Already the fame of the beauty of Chezmé had reached the ear of the Sultan; and an exaggerated statement of the few accomplishments she possessed, had distinguished her from the inmates of the harem, who were all contented to remain in the most barbaric ignorance; so that the flatterers of the Grand Vizier did not

hesitate to pronounce the elevation of Chezmé as certain, when Mahomet should have once beheld her.

With a soul bursting with rage and bitterness, Chezmé had listened to these prophecies, resolving, in her own mind, that they never should be fulfilled. Had she been chosen as the first and only wife of the Sultan, then, indeed, her warmest ambition had been gratified. To rule, and to rule alone, was her waking thought and her midnight dream; but to be confounded amongst the soulless tenants of a harem—caressed at one moment, then cast aside as worthless the next—to pine and wither in her jewelled chains, was a prospect of such torture and degradation to the daughter of the Vizier, that sooner than have endured it, she would have cast herself into the deep wave of the Maritza.

The nurse of Chezmé had been a Christian; and although reduced to slavery, she had apparently renounced her religion, it was but in outward form—her heart still clung to the faith of her fathers; and the young Chezmé, left motherless while an infant, listened to the tales wherewith her childish hours were beguiled, until a new light

seemed to break in upon her mind; and as she grew, and the powers of a precocious intellect were strengthened, a strong distrust of the truth of the religion of her fathers filled her heart, until it yearned to throw off the trammels of the dark and narrow creed her own good sense taught her to spurn.

In secret she had endeavoured to learn from her nurse the first rude elements of Christianity; but her preceptress was an ignorant and uneducated woman. She taught the anxious Chezmé the little that she herself knew, but upon all the points which most interested the inquiring mind of her nurseling, the poor woman was lamentably deficient; and dying before Chezmé had attained her fourteenth year, the mind of the unhappy girl remained in a perfect chaos of ideas upon all religious subjects. Every feeling of her impetuous nature partook of this unsettled state of mind. In hope, in trust of a divine protector, in horror of the degradation to which all the women of her nation blindly submitted, Chezmé was a Christian. This was chiefly because such trust suited with her own naturally noble and confiding sentiments.

Her ideas of Christianity had not taught her the smallest meekness, forbearance, or charity; and in hatred, revenge, in the unrestrained indulgence of luxury, and gratification of vanity, Chezmé surpassed even the most sensual of the burning clime to which she owed her birth. With these sentiments, no idea of duty interfered to restrain the hope of escape from her present thraldom. Every plan which her fertile brain could devise, was discussed between her and her faithful slave Ayba, a young Albanian girl, who had been taken prisoner in the late war, and presented by the Vizier to his daughter. Ayba had come from the same land as the nurse of Chezmé; and the fond recollection which she cherished of one whom she had really loved, induced the haughty Chezmé to relax from her usual pride, and admit, as a friend, the slave who had been given to serve her. They soon became inseparable; and Chezmé only waited for a favourable opportunity to confide to her faithful Ayba the thought which was ever present to her mind. In the meantime, she made a practice of dispensing with her usual state, and so constantly quitted the harem attended only by her

Greek slave, that her doing so very soon ceased to attract the attention of her guards.

The disguise in which the Turkish ladies are forced to appear when they leave their houses, was peculiarly favourable to the design of Chezmé. Wrapped in the impenetrable *feridgee* and *yashmak*, with her pretty slippers concealed by a pair of clumsy yellow boots, the daughter of the Vizier, accompanied by Ayba in a dress so exactly the same that it would have been impossible to have distinguished them, constantly loitered away the day in the bazaars and shops of the city. The Mahomedan laws, by which no man dares to stop a woman in the street, should he even be certain that the veiled figure is his wife or daughter, secured them from insult or intrusion; and no obstacle presented itself to her instant evasion, but the selection of her new place of abode: still this, to an inexperienced girl, presented a serious difficulty; and day after day, the ardent Chezmé had returned to her gilded prison with a heart full of hope, though weighed down by present despondency.

One day, as they were thus sauntering along the

street, their ears were suddenly assailed by the unusual clamour of voices issuing from the shop of a neighbouring Jew; and drawing near, in order to ascertain the cause, they learned, to their astonishment, that the Christian Ambassador was about to make his entry into Adrianople. The curiosity of Turkish women is unbounded; and notwithstanding the grave remonstrances of Ayba on the danger, as well as impropriety of their encountering the crowd, which already had begun to collect in the streets, Chezmé was resolute in remaining where she was; and sheltering themselves, as well as they could, behind a pile of goods which the Jew had collected in front of his dwelling, they awaited the arrival of Elphenor and his train.

Although fully concurring in the Moslem doctrine of fatalism, little did Chezmé think that that moment was to be the eventful one by which her destiny was to be decided. The handsome youth, who rode by the chariot of the Ambassador, cast one look only upon the muffled figures which appeared as if trying to shrink out of sight, and Demetrius of Ypsara passed on, unconscious that

that one look had sealed the fate of both, and bound up his own within it.

Thoughtful and silent, Chezmé returned to her palace, but from that hour one thought alone filled her breast. To seek out that youth, whose glance had filled her whole soul with love, and make his affections her own, was her instant determination; and not withheld by any motives of delicacy or shame, the accomplishment of the first part of her intention was easy.

The great object of curiosity she well knew to all strangers were the bazaars; and before Demetrius had been many hours in Adrianople, she had already spent moments in his society, which but too deeply confirmed the impression which his first appearance had created. Day after day were the same arts practised, until the times of their meeting were no longer left to chance; and Demetrius, forgetful of the danger, gave himself up to the pleasure with which these stolen hours inspired him. To the young Greek, there was a mystery attending the shrouded figures which ever hovered on his path,—which attracted him irresistibly towards them. One of them was evidently a

Greek; still the foreign accent of the other, though she spoke the language perfectly, excited his utmost surprise.

In spite of the closeness of their disguise, the women of the East have ever some manner of discovering to their admirers that they are neither old nor ugly, and Demetrius was not long in ascertaining this fact; but any attempt at finding out their names, or place of residence, was impossible. The peremptory tone of Chezmé, as she forbade him to follow her, instantly annihilated the presumptuous hopes which her words and manner, and constant appointment for the meeting of the next day, had raised in his bosom:—indeed, to follow any one of the muffled figures through the tortuous and crowded streets of a Turkish city, where hundreds of women, all disguised alike, are to be seen, would have been almost an impossibility.

Several days had been consumed in this manner, and Chezmé, whose whole thought was for herself, forgot that there might be more than one danger in the course she was pursuing. Accustomed to consider the presence of Ayba chiefly as a measure of convenience, her haughty mind never for an

instant contemplated the possibility of any interference from her slave, and she had therefore unhesitatingly admitted her to all her meetings with Demetrius; until Ayba, whose heart was equally susceptible with that of her mistress, resigned herself entirely to the delight with which the acquaintance of the young stranger had filled her.

In her eyes, he had one perfection which could scarcely have had the same power of attraction in those of Chezmé. He was Greek. None but the exile and the slave can fully comprehend the magic of the name of that country from which they have been torn. Surrounded by difficulties of which the affection of Chezmé formed one of the principal, Ayba did not dare openly to question her fellow-countryman, or seek his sympathy for the misfortunes which had deprived her of liberty and home. Oh! how she longed for an interview, even of a few moments, when she might pour out her sorrows to his ear. Once this thought had taken possession of her mind, she nursed it, until persuaded that no evil could arise from the gratification of her desire; and that it was equally the desire of him upon

whom her every thought was now fixed. The moment for the execution of her project was not far distant. Once determined, she would not pause; and as in the crowded street the watchful eye of Chezmé was for a moment averted, Ayba contrived to whisper, as she glided to the side of Demetrius, " To-night at midnight, in the gardens of the cemetery by the bridge of the Maritza."

And that night, and many succeeding ones, did they meet in the beautiful gardens by the river side. The waters murmured at their feet; the tall cedars spread their branches thick and dark, like a canopy above, until the glimmer of the gentle stars scarcely pierced the leafy screen, though lighting up the rose beds that breathed on all around. Fragrant, and calm, and far too dear were those lovely midnight hours, and they who looked upon that starlit-sky were passionate and young. And yet their love was not the same. Poor Ayba! At first only actuated by the wish of seeing one with whom she could claim kindred, and of listening to the sweet accents of her native tongue, so doubly dear in the land of slavery, she had hurried on, till now she loved Demetrius with

a love as fervent, and as wild, as that which thrilled through the proud heart of the daughter of the Vizier.

Ayba thought not of the future. The present was too full of joy. Faithful, however, to her mistress, though regardless of herself, she had resisted every entreaty of Demetrius to reveal the name of her whom she served; and it was only when Chezmé, having fully made up her mind to the consequences, had determined upon disclosing to the young Greek, not only her name and station, but also her intention of flying from her country, that Ayba was suddenly awakened to the painful and dangerous position in which she stood. Fond, passionate, and unhappy, the poor girl had never thought of herself; and when the haughty Chezmé, resuming her pride on imagining herself secure of the affections of Demetrius, determined no longer to seek him,—sent Ayba to reveal the secret of her state, and concert with him the means of visiting her in all her splendour, the wretched slave was so overwhelmed by the prospect of her misery, that she stood before Demetrius weeping bitterly, and was for a long time totally incapable of acquitting

herself of her message, or returning to dispel the anxiety of her mistress.

It was this delay which had produced in Chezmé the fit of irritation and ill-humour, from which she had suffered so much during her anxious watch in the kiosk. It had been arranged that Ayba should seek her there on her return from her interview with Demetrius; but the tedious day had worn away, and still Ayba came not. Many an hour since had passed, and the fretful Chezmé had wearied of the song and dance of her beauteous slaves, when, pale and wan, and with a trembling step, Ayba entered the apartment of her impatient mistress. Springing from the cushions upon which she still reposed, Chezmé hastily clapped her hands and pointed to the door. The group of slaves bent low their lovely heads, and laying their hands upon their lips and foreheads, instantly disappeared; and Ayba was left alone with her rival.

## CHAPTER IX.

"Well, what has delayed your return?" exclaimed the impatient Chezmé; "Will Demetrius come? what said he? Speak—speak," she continued wildly, without giving her hearer time to reply.

"Lady," began the trembling Ayba; but, on beholding the eagerness of Chezmé's glance, a jealous pang shot through her heart, and she gasped for breath.

"You are fatigued—you have had to seek him at a distance; sit down, sit down, my good Ayba," said her mistress; and, forgetting her usual state, she placed her slave on the cushion by her side.

"It was long before I could meet with him; he did not come to the bazaar, and I went to the square of the fountain," faltered Ayba, catching the idea of Chezmé for an excuse.

"But what said he?—How did he look, when he heard it was the Vizier's daughter who loved

him?" inquired Chezmé, with an involuntary glance of pride.

"He seemed surprised," replied Ayba, "and bade me remember the danger that awaited you as well as himself, should it even be suspected that he had visited you."

"I am grateful for such care," replied Chezmé, with a look of contempt; "but what else did he say?"

"He asked if you were not beautiful as the day; for that the fame of your charms had reached his ear in his own land."

The brow of Chezmé brightened as she listened to this well-timed flattery; and Ayba, who in truth had not delivered the message of her mistress, until Demetrius, weary of her society, was about to part from her, continued to pour into the willing ear of her listener a variety of compliments which had never been uttered by Demetrius, whose thoughts were too full of the exciting adventure he had met with to permit his usual freedom of speech.

"And so, you could devise no better plan of bringing him here, than dressing him up like a

woman," exclaimed Chezmé, pettishly, as Ayba detailed the scheme that she had planned with Demetrius, for introducing him into the forbidden precincts of the harem.

" No other has a chance of remaining undiscovered," humbly suggested Ayba. " It is true, he might reach the bottom of the garden by the river, but the balustrade is so high above the water, that it would be impossible to climb over it without a ladder, and where are we to get that? Hussein, the Bostanji, always takes his away with him, when he has done nailing up the flowers against the kiosk;" and Ayba, who doubtless had well considered every possible plan for admitting the stranger privately, before she had adopted the hazardous one of absenting herself from the harem at night, again urged the disguise of a female, as the most practicable device.

" Well then, if he wishes it—and you advise, I suppose it must be so," slowly replied Chezmé, whose soul revolted from the idea of her lover appearing for the first time in her presence, in a disguise so ill suited to his noble and somewhat martial bearing.

"But when will he come? Did you not appoint a time for our meeting?" asked Chezmé.

"He waits at the shop of the Jew Levi, near the corner of the bazaar," replied Ayba, with alacrity, her face beaming with delight at the thought of having once more to seek the presence of Demetrius.

"Then go to him—be quick, Ayba—nay, loiter not as you have done before to-day, but bring him here; and if the slaves who guard the door make any resistance, show them this ring, and say it is a holy woman, their lady would consult—a dealer in charms, that will protect me against the evil eye. Say what thou wilt, but bring Demetrius hither."

Ayba pressed her hands to her forehead, then crossed them meekly upon her breast, and glided from the chamber; and Chezmé, clapping her hands, commanded that the lamps of alabaster should be replenished with perfumed oil, and that she should be left alone. Once more the little mirror was consulted; but Chezmé saw at a glance, that the soft light of the lamps marvellously enhanced the beauty of which she was so proud, while her jewels sparkled still more brightly than in the glare of day.

In a much shorter time than she could have expected, the sound of approaching footsteps was heard; and Ayba appeared, leading in a figure which in no wise differed from the many that daily traversed the city, save in height; for the holy woman who knelt so lowly before the lovely queen of the harem was a full head taller than any who had ever before entered its walls. Chezmé could scarcely refrain from smiling, when she saw the awkwardness with which Demetrius endeavoured to manage the tortuous folds of his *yashmak* and *feridgee;* but the moment was too eventful to her to be thrown away upon trifles; and desiring Ayba to keep watch at the lower end of the hall, she was left alone with her lover, and at length consented to withdraw her veil.

The conversation of Chezmé, even while her person was disguised, had surprised and fascinated the young Greek; but now that it was permitted him to gaze upon her surpassing beauty, his senses were bewildered. He knew not which the most to admire, the beautiful lips, wreathed with a smile of affection, or the bright wit that flowed from them; or the startling independence of spirit that,

bred up in the thraldom of Turkish prejudices, could thus emancipate itself from them, and yet lose nothing of the queen-like dignity belonging to her state.

The quick-witted Chezmé was not slow to discover, that, in the position which Demetrius occupied, any attempt at connecting him with her intended flight from the harem would entail inevitable ruin upon both. In a few hurried words, Demetrius had explained to her the object of the Greek ambassador's mission to Adrianople; and Chezmé shuddered to think, that, ere long perhaps, her own father might lead the troops that would carry war and devastation into the land of him she loved. Seated upon a cushion at the feet of Chezmé, the young Greek had partly removed the disguise which sheltered him, and his ardent gaze fixed upon the glowing countenance of the Vizier's daughter, his whole heart was yielded up to the fascination of the moment, and his soul drank in deep draughts of love, such as never before had filled it.

In the sunny climes where these two fair creatures had first seen the light, love is often the offspring of a moment. The secrecy which must

ever be observed in meeting; the difficulty, the danger, all conspire to invest every love affair with a romance that is fearfully exciting; and the terrible punishment that awaits both parties, should any untoward discovery take place, is forgotten in the charm of those stolen moments which make a Paradise of earth. Nor does it unfrequently happen that an affection thus suddenly conceived, is more durable than such as have gradually arrived at maturity.

The women of the East have so seldom an opportunity of freely choosing for themselves, that, when such an event does occur, every thought and wish are centered in the object of their choice; and no longer irritated and galled by the compulsion which reigns in the harem, they continue to the end of their lives faithful and devoted to him they have first loved. Such a love as this, now filled the breast of the beautiful Chezmé; and as she listened to the vows of Demetrius, she resolved that no risk should prevent her from joining her fate with his. Night was advancing; the Muezzin's voice had long since called the last hour of prayer from the neighbouring minaret, ere Demetrius could tear

himself away. At length, however, having settled that the following evening they should meet again in the same manner, Chezmé no longer seeking to control her laughter, assisted her lover to arrange the disguise, which, had it not been for his stature, would have effectually concealed him.

It was not until he had reached the door of the apartment, that Demetrius recollected the presence of the unhappy Ayba; but as the tearful eyes of the poor slave glistened in the light, as she advanced to take his hand, in order to lead him through the passages towards the gate of the harem, the heart of Demetrius smote him, and he stood for a moment irresolute; but recovering himself, he quitted the presence of Chezmé without speaking. Tears choked the utterance of Ayba, and she proceeded in silence, until arrived at the outer court of the harem, she paused beneath the shadow of the portico, and clasping the hand of Demetrius within her own, she pressed it passionately to her lips.

"Ayba, forgive me," murmured Demetrius.

"I do," sobbed the poor girl; "for when you said you loved Ayba, you had not seen Chezmé."

Heart-struck by the sad humility of these words, Demetrius gently drew the trembling form of Ayba towards him, and imprinted a kiss upon her forehead; a kiss of pity—of remorse—of kindness—but not of love; and the passionate nature of Ayba revolted from its coldness. A shudder past over her, as she exclaimed,—

"I am but a poor slave, an orphan, and an outcast in the stranger's land. You will not betray me."

"Never," replied Demetrius. "I would perish sooner than breathe your name, save with affection and respect."

"Respect is not for Ayba, now," said the poor girl sadly, while her cheek burned with blushes, and affection; "alas! alas!" she exclaimed, wildly, as the words she had overheard, addressed by him she loved to another, recurred to her mind, and pressing her hands to her breast, her frame was convulsed with agony.

A deep sigh broke from the bosom of Demetrius, and bitterly did he curse the weakness and want of principle which had led him to profess a depth of love his heart did not feel.

" Ayba," he said softly, " Chezmé loves you. I will pray to her, and she will restore you to liberty. Once again in your own land, you will be happy."

" Never," replied Ayba, in a stifled voice, " where you are not."

" Do not say so," urged Demetrius. " Let me hope ——"

" Hush !" exclaimed Ayba softly, laying her finger on his lips, as the approach of footsteps was heard, and the dusky form of a watchman was seen crossing the court with a lantern in his hand.

With a noiseless tread, Ayba swiftly led the Greek along the inside of the portico. Had the watchman turned his head, they would infallibly have been discovered; but, fortunately, he imagined he had already sufficiently examined the side of the court where they then stood; and by following his steps cautiously, Ayba succeeded in reaching the outward gate, where the only sentinel that was awake happened to be the female negress, to whom Chezmé had given her commands to admit the wise woman whose visit she expected. Willingly, therefore, she undid the fastenings of the door, and Demetrius once more found himself at liberty.

## CHAPTER X.

At the appointed hour, on the following evening, Chezmé once again took her way to her kiosk in the garden, having determined upon receiving Demetrius there, in preference to her apartments in the harem. Attended by the obedient yet suffering Ayba, Chezmé had carefully arranged the interior of the summer-house, so as to present every object likely to please the eye and delight the senses of her visitor. The choicest perfumes burned in little golden lamps, placed in niches between the windows; tables loaded with delicious fruits were placed within reach of the divan; and the most refreshing liquids stood in vases of gold, enriched with precious stones. Sherbet, cooled with snow, conserve of roses served in golden spoons, the handles of which were set with diamonds, and every delicacy that was esteemed most rare by the fair

*gourmandes* of the harem, was now prepared with the greatest care.

Nor did this preparation excite the least surprise among the slaves and guardians of Chezmé. As was the case with all other females of her rank, within the walls of the harem, her will was absolute; and except upon the one point of admitting male visitors, a breach of decorum and religious observance undreamed of in the daughter of the Vizier; no fancy, however whimsical, troublesome, or expensive, excited either murmur or observation. An immense number of slaves, old and young, male and female, constantly waited upon the lightest wish of the fair Chezmé; yet, when the will of their mistress so ordained, this numerous retinue was instantly invisible. Not only did they conceal themselves from view, but their very breathing seemed suspended; and every sound, save the murmur of the fountains, was hushed within the precincts of the harem.

At other times, groupes of lovely girls might have been seen dancing together, or performing a variety of playful evolutions in illustration of some tale which one of them would repeat—a sort

of instinctive notion of comedy, generally ending in a lover's quarrel and reconciliation. The skill they displayed in some of these performances was far from being contemptible; and it had become one of the chief enjoyments of the Turkish ladies to entertain their visitors by a display of this kind, during the formal visits the inmates of one harem constantly deemed it necessary to make to those of another.

Often had Chezmé, when wearied by such amusements, which had little charm for her whose mind was capable of more intellectual enjoyments, commanded that her evening repast should be prepared in the kiosk, and that all should retire except Ayba; and there, alone with her favourite, who, though uneducated, could talk with her of other scenes, and a world which she longed to behold, Chezmé would while away the hours of her captivity in dreams of future days, whose brightness should compensate for the loneliness of her present lot. Now it seemed as though fate had heard her prayers, and that her vision of bliss was about to be realized; for whilst Chezmé gave herself up to the happiness of that idea, she forgot to think of the sin which

she was committing, or the danger to which the slightest accident might expose her. She forgot all but Demetrius, and the delight of seeing him again; and when, at length, she heard the sound of hurried steps beneath the covered walk of woodbine and cistus which wound along the confines of the garden, she could scarcely restrain herself so far as to retire hastily within the kiosk, and take her seat upon the divan. Joy as well as grief is selfish to an absorbing degree; and Chezmé, in the transport with which she half rose to receive her lover, marked not the look of anguish which tinged the pale cheek of her poor Ayba with a hue still more death-like than before, as she beheld Demetrius kneel before her mistress, pressing her jewelled fingers to his lips and heart, with a rapture that the unhappy slave well remembered had never marked his meetings with herself.

"He never loved *me*," exclaimed Ayba, almost aloud; and the first bitter thoughts which had ever entered her mind against a mistress she adored, swelled the breast of the wretched girl almost to bursting. She could scarcely control herself sufficiently to perform the duties of attendance which

devolved upon her. It was a dreadful task; and escaping from it as quickly as possible, Ayba sat down upon the steps of the kiosk, removed far enough not to overhear words which pierced her heart with anguish. Bowed down with grief, leaning her pale face upon her arms, she wept those bitter tears, which sooner or later ever flow when the path of virtue and rectitude has been forsaken! and rendered doubly desolate by her own fault, the unhappy girl listened to the murmur of the waves as they rolled past, and sighed for that repose she madly resolved one day to seek beneath their bosom!

Suddenly she raised her head—another sound seemed mingling with the voice of the waters;—it ceased—but no!—again it returns, and the affrighted Ayba springs to her feet. It is the sound of voices—loud and angry voices. Ayba steals to a thicket of magnolias and oleanders, which shelters the kiosk from view of the harem. Distraction! Lights are gleaming from every window—slaves are running to and fro affrighted; and the grim Ethiops of the Vizier's guard already line the court.

With the speed of light, Ayba regains the kiosk.

" The Vizier !—the Vizier !" was all she could utter ; and overpowered by the idea of the certain fate of Demetrius, should he be discovered, she sank senseless upon the floor.

Not so, Chezmé. Though pale as the marble beneath her feet, her presence of mind did not forsake her. Behind the divan where she sat, was a recess, concealed from view by a sliding panel in the wall. It had been originally intended as a place of safety for the rich cushions and other articles too cumbrous to be removed every night within the harem ; and communicated by steps with the ceiling of the kiosk, so that in fact it led to a low, though spacious apartment. Without an instant's hesitation, Chezmé undid the fastening, and pushing Demetrius within, hastily closed it again, and replacing the divan and cushions before it, she had, in a few moments, regained her composure sufficiently to encounter the eye of her father.

Well did she know that, in the event of any suspicion, the hiding place of Demetrius would not avail him for an instant ; but trusting to her woman's wit, she strove to calm the throbbings of her heart ; and on the entrance of the Vizier, she

rose in her accustomed manner, and kneeling on one knee before him, received his salutation upon her forehead. The countenance of Calil Pacha was livid with rage; his eyes seemed to squint into every corner of the apartment; and yet such was his trepidation, that he totally overlooked the crouching form of Ayba, who, having somewhat recovered, was kneeling in mute terror behind one of the pillars.

"Where is the accursed slave, by whom my harem is defiled?" asked he in a voice of thunder.

"What mean these words?" inquired Chezmé, in a well assumed tone of offended dignity.

"Bring forth the slave, I say; and let me wreak my vengeance on the spot, or, by the beard of the Prophet, I will slay every one within the harem walls," vociferated the enraged Vizier.

"My father's words are those of anger—his daughter listens but to obey," said Chezmé calmly.

"I will have vengeance—but why do I talk to a woman? the fault is mine, and my hand shall wash it away in blood. Oh! that ever I listened to thy prayer, and gave thee an accursed Christian for a slave."

The heart of Chezmé seemed to die within her at these words.

"If any in my service have offended the Vizier, he has only to speak," observed his daughter.

"Offended me!—disgraced—defiled—spit upon my very beard," roared the Vizier; "and it is thy favourite, thy Greek slave Ayba, who has brought this pollution upon our house. The Sultan will hear of it—then woe is me! He will say, the mistress is no better than the slave," continued Calil, whose chief cause of rage upon the occasion was the fear of its injuring his prospects with regard to his daughter's promotion.

"Ayba—impossible," exclaimed Chezmé, somewhat relieved at finding the danger transferred from herself.

"It is true—woe is me—it is too true," replied the Vizier; "every night until the last, has she been seen to hold converse with one of the accursed Christians sent by Alláh to disturb the peace of our city. This moment I have been informed of it by an eye witness; call forth the slave, and question her, if thou wilt, before I deal with her as she deserves," said Calil, while his hand grasped the handle of his scimitar.

" Not so, my father," firmly replied Chezmé, who had her own reasons for not wishing that any examination of the timid Ayba should take place. " My slaves are my own, to deal with as I think fit."

" Thou art no fitting judge of a crime so heinous," replied the Vizier, in an uncertain voice, his contempt for the sex of his daughter mingling with his habitual awe of the determination of her character.

" Most fitting," said Chezmé, sternly; " when my father placed me at the head of his harem, my duties were made known to me—say, have I turned from them ?"

" Nay, thou art a pearl of discretion, as well as a rose of beauty, fit only for the bride of a sultan," replied the Vizier, who always ended in flattering his daughter, whenever she showed symptoms of rebellion. A smile of scorn curled the beautiful lip of Chezmé as she replied:

" 'Tis well—wherefore seek, then, to disturb my dominion ? If I want aid, I will ask it; but if my father loves his daughter, he will not seek to make the slaves of her harem subjects of ill report,

but rather conceal from every ear the shame that has fallen upon her. Withdraw your guards, and command that all instantly retire within the sleeping apartments.

" I will question Ayba—if she is guilty, shall Chezmé stoop to screen her? Rather will I, myself, inflict the punishment she would so justly deserve."

So spoke the proud Chezmé, in the full conviction of the innocence of her favourite; and restored to confidence by the turn the affair had taken, she received with calmness the farewell of her father, and making a sign to the trembling Ayba to remain concealed from his view, she herself conducted the Vizier to the door of the kiosk, and soon had the happiness of hearing him depart, immediately after which, a deep silence reigned in the garden. Returning to the kiosk, the daughter of the Vizier went straight to the panel which concealed Demetrius; and opening it, took from him the disguise which he wore, then leading him through the deepest of the shaded walks which skirted the garden, she did not pause until they stood upon the brink of the river.

" Demetrius," she said, in a low voice, " you are saved ; but the danger of this night has taught me prudence—we must not meet again;—at least not here," she added, seeing that he was about to contradict her words.

" Not meet again," exclaimed Demetrius, " I would sooner die a thousand deaths than give up an instant of your society, my beauteous, my beloved Chezmé ——"

Chezmé cast her eyes to heaven with a look of rapture, and after a moment's pause, replied—" One day we shall meet again—I feel it—I am assured of it ; for a secret warning has told me, from the first, that my fate is linked with your's. Nay," she continued, looking fearfully around, " I know it, for the stars have predicted it ; the very day after my eyes first beheld you, I hastened to consult the great Almanzor, whose prophecies have never been known to fail."

" And what did he foretel, as the fate of the beautiful Chezmé ?" asked Demetrius, with a smile, at the earnestness of belief which one so gifted could yet place in the words of an astrologer.

" Nay, my name was a secret to him ; but he

told me my fate would be different from that of other women; for that the star of my nativity was linked with one placed far away in the heavens. Demetrius—thou art that star—and we shall meet again."

Again! again! oh, oft again, and to part no more," exclaimed Demetrius, half induced, by the serious eyes which beamed upon him, to indulge in a superstition so prevalent in that age that few persons in the East were totally free from it.

" It is that certainty," said Chezmé, " that will support me; now promise that till that hour comes, no vow of love to another shall ever pass thy lips."

" I do—I swear it, by all that we both hold most sacred—by the heaven that is above us—by ——"

" Enough," said Chezmé, hurriedly; for the thought of all that might intervene before she again beheld him she loved, was becoming too painful for endurance.

" Enough—I believe—and I trust you. Wear this," she continued, drawing a ruby ring from her finger, and placing it on the hand of Demetrius; " Chezmé will one day redeem her ring." She

turned, and pointing to the river, whispered, "No other way is left for escape:—a few moments will bear you across the waves. Do not seek me again until you hear from me. Demetrius, farewell!" and Chezmé bent her head for the first time on the bosom of her lover.

Demetrius, as he pressed her frantically to his heart, did not see the tears that were rapidly falling down her cheeks. Another moment, and a heavy plunge struck upon the ear of Chezmé, who watched until she saw him she loved, safely ascend the flowery bank of the garden on the opposite side of the river; and then, with a secret thanksgiving to Heaven for having escaped the dangers of the night, Chezmé returned to the harem.

## CHAPTER XI.

Engrossed by her own situation, which certainly presented no small difficulties to her excited view, Chezmé had been some time in her apartment unconscious of the presence of Ayba, who remained at the lower end of the room, mute and pale like a statue of despair; her hands clasped before her, and her straining eyes fixed upon the face of her mistress. At every movement of Chezmé, the wretched slave seemed as if expecting that her doom was about to be pronounced; for she doubted not, even if Demetrius had been true to his promise, that, during his absence from the kiosk, Chezmé had still contrived to elicit sufficient of the truth to justify the condemnation of her guilty slave. What moments of anguish might have been spared to Ayba, could she have guessed that not even a suspicion of her fault lurked in the bosom of Chezmé. To one more skilled in the ways

of the world and its dissimulation, the idea might have suggested itself, that at all events it would be better to wait until she should be questioned, and frame her avowal according to what she found was the extent of the information possessed by her interrogator.

Ayba was the untutored child of nature. She had committed a sin, that, in her country and in the class of life to which she belonged, was not considered so heinous as in that land in which she was now a slave. She had given her heart unasked and unsought for, and had eagerly received a few common-place expressions of gallantry as a genuine return of her own true and passionate affection. Too soon had she learned that this was the case; and that the love of Demetrius was not as her love for him; and the bitterness of that discovery had at first overwhelmed all other faculties; but now, to her former griefs, the shame of exposure was added, and the little fortitude with which she had been gifted by nature, gave way before such an accumulation of distress.

With intense anxiety Ayba had watched from a distance the escape of Demetrius, and the return of

Chezmé to the harem; and following silently, she had expected every instant to be called before her judge; but the abstraction of Chezmé had deferred the moment, when, by a full confession of both her faults and her sorrow, Ayba hoped to have softened the heart of her mistress.

When the mind is intensely wrought up to the performance of any deed which it considers indispensable, delay is intolerable torture. The unhappy Ayba, during the time she stood as if awaiting the moment of confession, was a prey to this feeling in its most aggravated form. The tension of every nerve and sense became too strong for endurance, till at last it burst from her bosom in such a groan of anguish that Chezmé started, and, for the first time aware of her presence, called Ayba to her.

"Lady—mistress—oh, forgive me—forgive the wretched, guilty Ayba!" exclaimed the poor girl, as she rushed towards Chezmé, embracing her feet, and prostrating herself till her forehead rested upon the marble floor.

"How?" said Chezmé, her look filled with horror. "Guilty! oh! not guilty, my poor Ayba—all who are accused are not guilty;" and she

stooped, and kindly endeavoured to raise the sobbing girl from the floor.

"It was all true—all that his Highness the Vizier said was true—all—and more than that," exclaimed Ayba, wildly tossing her arms above her head, as she knelt before her mistress.

"Nay—calm thyself, dear Ayba, I will not believe it:—thou canst not be so lost," said Chezmé, in a tone of agony.

"Yes—yes—it is true. I did meet him every night in the gardens by the new bridge over the Maritza. Oh God! those nights of happiness!" she exclaimed almost with a shriek, as she lifted a look of impassioned tenderness towards heaven. "But now," she continued, as an expression of deep distress replaced it, "I would not have them come again—oh no—I could not, even if I might ——"

"Do not speak so wildly," said Chezmé; "but tell me how this happened, and how you could run so deadly a risk for one whom it would seem you cannot have known long ——"

"You ask me how it happened," replied Ayba quickly; "Lady, ask thyself how it is that the first glance of the beloved one sinks into the heart

—how it is that the mind dwells upon that glance, till the soul sees it in all around—the air, the earth, the flowers—all beam with it; and then, when after days bring sighs and honied words, and half-breathed syllables, and the light trembling touch that sends the blood quick from the heart till every pulse is maddened into fire—Lady, how is it then, that all the world seems naught?—all blank—all desolate, but the one spot shadowed by the form we love—love, oh far too well to think of self? How is it then, that we forget all, but the one who taught us thus to feel? Lady, my words are bold—but ask me no more from whence has sprung my sin and my disgrace. Thyself hast loved, and so thy question were best answered by thy heart."

Tears filled the eyes of Chezmé as she listened to the words of her poor slave, while her own heart bore witness to their truth. The fact of the guilt of Ayba was now too evident for her mistress to indulge in any hope of concealing the matter from the knowledge of the Grand Vizier. The very nature of Ayba forbade such a hope, and only one course remained for Chezmé.

"Ayba," she said, as she drew her gently towards

her, " I fear thy sin has been great; yet it is not for one who is herself so guilty to heap reproaches on thy head. Thou knowest that in this country the punishment is dreadful; even if sentence of death should not be pronounced, public exposure, with hard labour for life, is the most lenient that is ever accorded."

" Alas! alas! death were far better," sobbed poor Ayba.

" There yet remains one way of escape," said Chezmé. " If I give thee thy liberty, no one will inquire into the deeds of a free woman and a foreigner; thus thou mayest regain thine own country, or, at least, seek some other, where thou mayest be happy."

" Lady—mistress—angel—oh! how can the wretched Ayba thank thee for such words," cried Ayba, embracing the knees and feet of her mistress.

" The certainty of thy happiness and safety will be my best reward; and I shall need some, Ayba, for I shall miss thy kindness," said Chezmé, mournfully. " But tell me," she continued, " who is he for whom thou hast sacrificed so much?"

Ayba hung her head, and, covering her face with her hands, did not reply.

"Why dost thou hesitate?" asked her mistress. "Once free, thou must seek him out; if his heart is noble, he will remember all thou hast done for him, and Ayba may yet be a happy wife."

"Never! oh, never!" murmured Ayba.

"Nay, then I fear it is a love thou art ashamed to avow—some low-born slave—some ——"

"No, Lady—no slave!" cried Ayba, almost fiercely, "but noblest among the noble!"

"Then name him," said Chézmé, whose curiosity was strongly aroused by the hesitation of her slave. "I have much power—if he is as thou sayest, fear not; he shall do thee justice—speak."

The trepidation of Ayba returned.

"Ayba, I will be answered. Speak—I insist upon it—who is the man whom you love?" said Chezmé, in a tone of authority.

"Lady, dost thou indeed command that I should speak?" asked Ayba, humbly, being totally unused to dispute the orders she received.

"I do," replied Chezmé, haughtily, "who is it?"

" Demetrius of Ypsara," whispered the trembling Ayba, but in so low a tone, that it scarce could reach the attentive ear of Chezmé.

" Demetrius!" she exclaimed, starting to her feet, while her eyes flashed fire, as if they would have struck the trembling form of Ayba with instant death.

" Demetrius!—'tis false—thou darest not say it."

" It is true," said Ayba, meekly folding her hands upon her breast, " Ayba cannot lie to her mistress. It is Demetrius whom I have loved—and for whom," she added in a lower tone, " I have sinned."

" Slave—minion!" cried Chezmé, furiously, " how didst thou dare to lift thine eyes to one so much above thee, or imagine, in thy foolish heart, that he could stoop to such a thing as thou?"

" Lady," said Ayba, proudly, for she was stung to the heart by the contemptuous tone of her mistress, " I have said before, thine own heart, which now beats with love, can best reply to thy questions. Do with me as thou wilt—but, oh!

when I am dead, let my name be forgotten! do not speak it with scorn to—him—to Demetrius."

"Name him not to me," exclaimed Chezmé, "or I will strike thee dead upon the spot, thou vile, abandoned creature, that seekest to hide the shame, that doubtless thou hast long since known, beneath the shelter of his noble name." A cry of agony burst from the lips of Ayba, at this cruel accusation—and she cast herself at the feet of the infuriated Chezmé, sobbing so bitterly, her heart seemed almost bursting from her bosom.

"Say any thing but that—torture me, slay me, only do not say it was not love that tempted me to sin; do not seek to blacken me yet more than I deserve, nor make him revile the memory of the wretched Ayba—him—oh, my God—for whose least look of love I would have given my life—my very soul!"

Driven to desperation by these words, the impiety of which touched her less than the burning love, it was apparent another had felt for him, whom she herself had chosen,—Chezmé, whose Eastern temperament had entirely overcome her usual good

sense and dignity, seized the unhappy Ayba by her long hair, and drawing forth a poniard she always carried beneath her vest, was about to plunge it into the bosom of the trembling girl, when some sudden thought seemed to change her intention, for she remained motionless, with her hand uplifted. It was a terrible exemplification of the horror of unbridled passions, to behold these two women, formerly the delight of each other's existence, in the awful position in which they thus stood!

Chezmé, whose every movement when at rest was stately and queenlike, now glared upon her victim with the rage of a demon. The splendour of her dress contrasted fearfully with the contracted brow and compressed lips, which showed that there was intense suffering within; and the marble paleness of that cheek, which a few moments before had glowed with the damask hue of the rose, made the fierce flashings of her large black eyes still more wild and fearful. Writhing under the accumulated torture of rage, wounded self-love, and jealousy so deadly, that it amounted almost to madness, Chezmé, as she seized the unhappy Ayba,

forgot their long friendship, and the helpless condition of her poor slave. Revenge was the only thought that could bring solace to her infuriated breast; and when she stood above her victim, who, still kneeling upon the floor, uttered but one feeble cry, as she bent her head backwards to receive the fatal blow upon her bosom, the thought that arrested the hand of Chezmé was not of pity or remorse!—it was the cold calculation of the fiendish spirit which at that moment possessed her, that, by inflicting instant punishment, she should lose the revenge of gloating upon the agony of her rival—which made her, as she gazed upon the haggard features of the poor wretch who had attempted to supplant her in the affections of Demetrius, gradually relax her hold; and the sound of the poniard, as it rung upon the marble of the floor, told Ayba that, for a time, her life was spared.

"Follow me," said Chezmé, in a harsh and hollow tone; and without uttering another word, she led the way to an upper chamber, large, gloomy, and totally unfurnished. The rays of the lamp which she carried in her hand could not penetrate the darkness of this dismal apartment, as,

standing at the door, she motioned to Ayba to enter. Trembling with apprehension, the poor girl obeyed; but when she saw her mistress preparing to lock the door of the room, she threw herself suddenly at her feet, and implored her to have mercy, and not to leave her to darkness and solitude.

"Kill me at once; but do not leave me here! my heart is broken! I cannot bear to be alone," cried the wretched slave, bursting into a fresh agony of tears.

"It is dark," said Chezmé, with a scowl of hatred that would have done honour to a demon; "but not more dark than the cypress grove by the banks of the Maritza;" and with a violent effort she disengaged the folds of her dress from the grasp of Ayba, and, closing the door, in a moment afterwards the grating of the key upon the lock told the prisoner her doom. One wild scream of agony reached the ear of Chezmé, who, appalled by the torture of mind it revealed, half withdrew the key from her girdle, where she had placed it; but the cry was not repeated; and grinding her teeth as she murmured the name of Demetrius, Chezmé retired to her own apartment.

That night, no slave was summoned to attend their mistress, for during the long hours of darkness Chezmé continued to pace the room incessantly, her mind a prey to the most fierce emotion. At length, worn out by her own impetuosity, she sank upon a sofa, and the first fury of her passion having abated, the better feelings of her nature began to regain the ascendant; and a sentiment of pity for her unhappy slave crept into the bosom which had lately been filled only with hatred, and the desire of revenge. The acuteness of her perception enabled Chezmé to see at a glance all that had happened; and though a feeling of contempt for Demetrius certainly arose within her heart, yet her self-love was gratified by the reflection that from the moment he had been permitted to behold her, and to become assured of her affection, he had not thought again of Ayba.

This balm to her wounded vanity, somewhat appeased the wrath of Chezmé; and as her feelings regained their accustomed tone, the generous spirit, which was strangely blended with her imperious and vindictive nature, returned; and she felt ashamed of having visited so severely upon another a sin which differed but in degree, and not in prin-

ciple, from her own. To atone by kindness for the cruelty she had shown to Ayba, was her instant determination; but to devise some immediate plan for the future, was also an imperative obligation. If she hesitated, even for a day, the law might take its course, and her friend and favourite would be beyond her power. To make her the partner of her flight, after the disclosure of that night, she felt to be impossible; and having weighed the matter in every different form, she came to the conclusion that her original plan, of conferring liberty upon her slave, was in every respect the best. Satisfied with this determination, Chezmé, worn out with fatigue, at length threw herself upon her cushions, resolving, that her first act, on the following morning, should be to restore tranquillity to the tortured bosom of Ayba.

## CHAPTER XII.

It was late on the following day when Chezmé awoke from the heavy sleep into which the events of the foregoing had plunged her. At first, her ideas were confused, but she was soon able to recollect distinctly all that had occurred; and starting from her couch, she hastened to undo the fastenings of the door, resolved not to lose a moment in seeking the presence of Ayba, and announcing to her the joyful tidings of pardon and of freedom. The heart of Chezmé bounded as she thought of the rapture which in another moment would fill the bosom of Ayba. Already she felt the tears and kisses with which she knew her grateful slave would welcome the first kind look from her mistress; and full of delight at the idea of the joy she was about to confer, Chezmé drew the key from her girdle, and hastily traversing the apartments which separated her from that in which Ayba was confined, had already begun to ascend the stairs which would lead her

to the presence of her prisoner, when a sound suddenly struck upon her ear, and caused her to pause.

It was a sound so unusual within the harem, that the cheek of Chezmé blanched as it reached her. It was a sound of lamentation and weeping, and of many voices; and as Chezmé descended the staircase, and advanced towards the court from whence it issued, she fancied she heard her own name pronounced more than once. Alarmed, though she knew not wherefore, she now pressed forward. It seemed as if every slave within the harem had collected in the court; and as the crowd opened on the appearance of Chezmé, a cry of horror, so frantic that beneath it every other sound was hushed, burst from her lips.

Upon the ground before her lay the lifeless body of the unfortunate Ayba! A frightful wound upon one side of her head, showed too plainly the manner of her death; and for the first time Chezmé remembered that the room in which she had been confined, communicated with the roof of the palace. The unhappy girl, as the hours wore on, and brought no prospect of

release had been unable to bear the torture of her own thoughts; and rendered frantic by the solitude she endured, had precipitated herself into the court below, and found upon its marble bosom, the death for which her misery had taught her to sigh.

" It is I who have murdered her," cried the wretched Chezmé, as she threw herself on her knees by the body, and, regardless of the gazing throng, that shrunk back affrighted at her grief, she pressed her face upon the yet quivering lips of her poor slave, and raising the head upon her bosom, kissed away the tears which were still wet upon the cheek of Ayba.

But vain was all her tenderness; and useless now were the words she addressed to her whom she had so cruelly treated. Forgiveness came too late; and the crushed and wounded spirit had fled, before the balm of returning kindness could shed its sweetness o'er it. The eyes that would have beamed with gladness were closed—and for ever! —In vain her mistress called upon her to awaken! —in vain she prayed for one last look—one sign that she forgave her!—though gladly would the

haughty Chezmé have exchanged places with her slave the moment after she had pronounced her pardon. Ayba never spoke again. The small head of the poor Greek girl grew heavy on the sinking bosom of Chezmé—the graceful limbs began to stiffen, and the blood which at first had welled in a boiling stream from the wound, now slowly fell in thickening drops upon the gorgeous dress in which Chezmé had remained since the previous day. Colder and colder grew the form which was yet fondly clasped to the breast of one, who, with all her evil passions, still could feel more warmth of attachment than many more enlightened could boast; and it was not till a certainty so dread that none can withstand its power, forced itself on the mind of Chezmé, that she would yield up the treasure that she held. Once more she looked upon the face of her she had so loved in life—once more she tried to pronounce her name—the effort was beyond her strength; her senses abandoned her; she sunk upon the body, and alike unconscious of their last embrace, the living and the dead lay side by side!

## CHAPTER XIII.

While these events were passing within the walls of the harem, another, of more trifling appearance, yet closely connected with the fate of an entire nation, had occurred in the city of Adrianople. The messenger dispatched to Constantinople had returned, and delivered to Elphenor the answer of his sovereign, to the extraordinary request of the Sultan. Foreseeing the danger which would arise from the unsuspicious nature of Constantine, Elphenor had not failed, in his capacity of counsellor, to set before the Emperor the manifold disadvantages, as well as perils, of allowing even the smallest portion of territory so immediately in the vicinity of the seat of his empire, to be occupied by an enemy; for thus, in spite of all the flattery and fair promises heaped upon him, Elphenor unhesitatingly represented Mahomet to his own sovereign. Fruitless, however, was the precaution

of Elphenor, and all seemed to conspire to hurry on that fate, which perhaps, by timely caution, might have been averted.

It had been the earnest prayer of Elphenor, that he might be permitted to be the bearer of the request of the Sultan to Constantine; but Mahomet, who foresaw too well the result that would probably arise from the presence of Elphenor at Constantinople, refused his consent to such entreaty; and though he hated, even while forced to respect the upright, unbending nature of the Greek Ambassador, he pretended to have conceived a violent friendship for him, constantly detaining him near his person, and trying to beguile the time by shows and spectacles of a superb nature, in which the wealth and power of his kingdom were ostentatiously displayed to the eyes of Elphenor and his train. In this manner, many valuable days were lost, ere the messengers of the Sultan, who were to accompany those of the Ambassador, were pronounced ready for the journey. Arrived at Constantinople, and acting, no doubt, from instructions received before-hand, a considerable delay took place before they set out upon their

return, thus extending to several weeks an affair which might have been disposed of in a fourth of the time.

Harassed beyond endurance by a duplicity he could not counteract, Elphenor hailed the return of his messenger with a joy that was ill concealed from the searching eye of Mahomet; but this moment of delight was soon forgotten in the dismay with which the Ambassador received the orders of his sovereign. Not only did Constantine comply with the demand of the Sultan, but with a noble generosity, which spoke more for the kindly feelings of his heart, than for the soundness of his judgment as a statesman, he desired his enemy to select the spot most suited to his taste upon the shores of the Bosphorus, and promised that it should be his own for ever. In return, he asked that an annual stipend, which had been granted to the Greeks for the maintenance of an Ottoman prince, who resided amongst them, should be henceforth punctually paid; and concluded by renewing the assurances he had already made, through his Ambassador, of friendship and good-will towards the Ottoman empire.

The heart of Mahomet bounded with joy, as he perceived how completely his enemy had fallen into the trap he had laid for him, and he now willingly consented to permit the departure of Elphenor, to whom he sent presents of the most magnificent description; appointing, at the same time, an hour on the following day for an audience, when the Ambassador was to take leave.

With a brow clouded with sorrow, Elphenor stood in his chamber, calmly watching the dexterity of the black slaves, as they entered his room one after another, and piled up the rich gifts of the Sultan, until the floor was covered with them. To have refused them openly would have been an offence not easily forgiven by an Ottoman Emperor; and Elphenor felt that he had no right to provoke so powerful an enemy; but to accept of the smallest trifle was a degradation to which he resolved not to submit; and he, therefore, as soon as they were collected, desired that the Vizier might be informed that he wished to speak with him.

From the moment of the arrival of Elphenor at Adrianople, Calil Pacha had never enjoyed a quiet hour. Uncertain whether his former treacherous

communications with the Romans were known to Elphenor or not, he had not dared to commit himself with one, the austerity of whose manners gave him little encouragement. Hitherto, the Ambassador had shown no further indications of friendship towards the Vizier, than the formal courtesy their relative situations imposed; but when Calil received a friendly message from Elphenor, praying that he would dispense with state, and come to his residence unattended, the hopes of the greedy Vizier began to rise. What was his delight, when, on entering the apartment of the Ambassador, he beheld the goodly collection of reasures with which the floor was heaped. His eyes rolled rapidly from one side to the other; and such was the avarice of his soul, that, had it been possible, he would willingly have possessed himself by theft of any one of the tempting objects before him. The stern eye of Elphenor seemed to read him to the heart; and affecting an admiration which he was far from feeling for such trifles, he began to descant upon the merits of each article as he raised it from the ground, holding it up to the enraptured gaze of the Vizier, and

extolling the liberality of the Sultan, who had made him lord of all this wealth. The praises of his master were but faintly echoed by the Vizier; but his admiration for the jewels, and rich stuffs before him, was of the most heartfelt description.

"Holy Alláh," exclaimed he, "but these pearls are worth a kingdom. What fullness—what lustre," he continued, holding them up to the light, "and this ruby—by the beard of the Sultan, 'tis almost as fine as the one that his Highness wears in his turban of state—its worth is incalculable."

"Incalculable," repeated Elphenor; "nay, the value must surely somewhat depend upon the estimation in which it is held by its owner."

"The Christian dog," thought Calil secretly, "he knows not a ruby from a lump of lead. Is it possible," he said aloud, "that in your country you esteem lightly a jewel of such price?"

"There are some things which would please me better," replied Elphenor, fixing his eyes on the face of Calil Pacha, "which, perhaps, are of little value to you."

"If aught of mine hath pleased you," began Calil, cautiously ——

" I speak not of jewels," interrupted the Greek ; " but, first, can you be secret ?" he asked, inclining his head towards the Vizier, and speaking in a whisper.

" Ah ! what mean you ?" said Calil, starting, and letting fall the precious string of pearls, which Elphenor instantly picked up.

" I mean what I said," replied the Greek, calmly picking up, and feigning to count the pearls, in order to give the cupidity of the Vizier time to recover its usual ascendant. " They *are* magnificent," he continued, as he placed them in his vest, without seeming to remark the look of intense anxiety the movement excited upon the speaking countenance of the Vizier ; " and I thought, as you had a daughter of whom fame speaks so highly, they might have been a fitting present."

" My daughter Chezmé !—she is, indeed, a treasure in herself ; but women are weak creatures, and love these bright gems, which to us are valueless," said Calil with an effort at indifference ; " for my daughter indeed ——"

" You might be inclined to barter some of the

wondrous knowledge with which men say the Vizier's head is stored," said Elphenor, in a voice from which all sarcasm was with difficulty banished.

"Nay—for my daughter's sake," began Calil, who had been turning the ruby he still held into every possible position during the flattering speech of Elphenor. "By Alláh! not a flaw is to be found in it; yea, it is marvellous; never did my eyes behold a stone so perfect!" he exclaimed, as if totally unable to repress the admiration which filled his soul.

"It is yours," whispered Elphenor, "together with all you behold, if you swear to answer my questions honestly."

"All—did you say all?" asked the Vizier with an air of surprise. "All—why? only look at this cloth of gold; there is sufficient to cover the floor of the Hall of the Hundred Pillars; and these shawls—the finest cashmere wool. Holy Alláh! but each one is fit for the waist of the Sultan. And the green muslin—the Emirs will give any price for that—and—but did you say all? he again asked of Elphenor, as, having turned over

most of the goods which lay upon the ground, he suddenly espied two caskets set with sapphires and emeralds of so much magnificence, that the very doubt of possessing them almost took away his breath.

"Yes! all," replied the Greek, with difficulty suppressing the contempt which the agitated demeanor of his companion inspired; for Calil, kneeling on one knee in the midst of the heap of glittering objects, actually trembled from head to foot; his round face, as he raised it towards Elphenor, growing every moment more and more crimson, while the intensity with which he fixed one eye upon the countenance of the Ambassador, had the effect of sending the other to watch over, in an oblique direction, the treasures which he almost felt to be his own.

"All!" repeated Elphenor, as he gave into the trembling hands of the Vizier the pearls which he had deposited in his vest.

"And what must I give in exchange?" asked Calil, with a slavish look at the towering form of Elphenor.

"I ask but a few words," replied the latter.

" Words are easily spoken," said Calil with animation, as his eyes gloated over his treasures; " so they be not treasonable," he added, however, with a look of terror.

" Or that they are not overheard," suggested Elphenor, lowering his voice.

" Nay—we are safe enough here—your Christian soldiers guard this quarter of the palace."

Elphenor smiled at the admission, and continued, —" How long will it be ere Mahomet be fully prepared to march upon Constantinople?"

" Alláh defend us—his Highness has no such intention," stammered Calil; " we are friends to the Christians, are we not?"

" How long must it be," repeated Elphenor firmly, " before the army can be equipped? and, when equipped, what force can the Sultan muster?"

" How can I tell?" asked the Vizier, trembling from head to foot. " His Highness has not condescended to inform me."

" Forgive me—I am so unskilled in your laws—I may have erred, in thinking the Grand Vizier both knew and would speak the truth. I will not

inquire further; and," continued he, pointing to the floor, " our bargain of course is at an end."

The word bargain instantly revived all the Jewish propensities of Calil, who, casting a wistful look upon his treasures, came close up to the side of Elphenor, and whispered, " If I trust you, my life is in your hands;—what guarantee shall I have that you will not betray me to Mahomet?"

" The simple fact that I have not already done so," replied Elphenor.

" Look upon this;" and he drew from his bosom a scroll, upon which the eye of Calil had no sooner rested, than his face faded to a hue almost cadaverous, and, while his teeth chattered so that he could scarcely articulate, he gasped forth—

" Thou art a man of worth—generous, and to be trusted. I will trust thee. Know, then, that scarcely will the sound of thy horses' feet have died in the streets of Adrianople, as thou turnest thy back upon the city, than preparations will be commenced for the destruction of thine empire. Two hundred thousand men are ready to march with the morning light, and ships innumerable lie

concealed in various harbours along the coast. At a moment's warning, they will collect upon the seas; and, like a swarm of locusts, the Turkish troops will pour down from every side upon the unwary Christians. The Sultan's words are fair; but hate is in his heart. This is the truth—Calil has spoken it. Be warned, and tarry not in a city already doomed; for," continued the Vizier, as he turned his eyes to the floor, "thou art a man of worth."

"Desert my country, my Sovereign!" exclaimed Elphenor, fervently. "Never. Unhappy Constantine! But I thank thee," he hastily added, as he checked the words of sorrow that rose to his lips. "You have fulfilled your promise; now let me perform mine."

So saying, Elphenor was about to direct that the gorgeous presents of the Sultan should be transferred to the palace of the Vizier; but Calil, interrupting him, explained, that, should it ever be surmised that he had received such riches from the Christian Ambassador, his life might be the instant forfeit. Drawing forth his tablets, he gave Elphenor the address of a Jewish merchant, and in a

short time the treasures, for which the Vizier had treacherously sold the secrets of his master, were collected by Elphenor, and dispatched, in his name, to the merchant, who was secretly leagued with the Vizier in all the infamous transactions in which he was constantly engaged. The danger which attended the course of life in which he indulged, did not appear to affect the spirit of Calil whenever his interest was concerned; and upon this occasion, so exhilarated was he by the enormous profit which he had obtained, in return for his information, that he seemed totally forgetful of that peculiar gravity of demeanour, which, if not natural, the Turks practise as a habit, until it becomes almost inseparable from their words and actions.

Calil, as his mind revelled in the recollection of the splendour of the pearls and rubies which he had made his own, totally forgot that he was a Turk; and laughed, and rubbed his short fat hands with most unbecoming glee. At length, just as he had bidden adieu to Elphenor, and was about to take his departure, as he said, upon matters of state, but, in reality, to count over his treasures at the house of his friend and confidant, an unusual

sound was heard without the walls of the palace; and an officer hastily informed the Vizier that a female slave from his harem demanded instant admittance. Startled by so unexpected an occurrence, the Vizier had scarcely time to answer, ere the old negress, who was at the head of the female department, was seen pushing her way in at the door, and having disengaged herself from the guards, who would have held her back, she prostrated herself before the Vizier, exclaiming, with the wildest cries,—

"She is gone! She is gone! Mercy! Mercy!"

"Who? what?" exclaimed the terrified Vizier.

"The Lady Chezmé; the rose of the harem; the jewel of the eye of the Vizier. She is lost, lost;" and again she broke forth into frantic cries.

"Slave! beast! daughter of a dog, cease thy howling, and answer me. What does this mean? Where is my daughter?" roared the enraged Vizier, remembering, for the first time that day, that he had a daughter.

"Alas! how can I tell?" replied the woman, somewhat subdued by the fury of the Vizier. "Last evening, the Lady Chezmé went forth to

place some flowers on the tomb of the Greek slave, Ayba, and she has never returned."

"Fool! you did not suffer her to go alone," cried the Vizier, trembling with rage.

"Nay; she was attended, as usual, by four slaves," replied the negress; "but saying she would be left alone to pray by the grave of Ayba, the slaves retired a few paces, and although they never took their eyes from the spot where they left her, she had disappeared in a moment. Oh, woe is me!"

"They shall be flayed alive," screamed the Vizier; "and every soul in the harem shall receive the bastinado on the soles of their feet, every alternate hour, until she be brought back."

With these words Calil strode towards his palace, followed by the trembling negress, who was scarcely able to put her feet upon the ground, from the dreadful anticipation of the torture she expected to endure. But vain were all the efforts of the Vizier; and the screams of the agonized slaves, as they were seized upon, to undergo their punishment, could not compensate for the anguish which filled the soul of the rapacious father, as he disco-

vered that not only Chezmé had fled, but that she had contrived to carry off all her valuable jewels; thus, at one blow, depriving him of the hope which he entertained, of placing her in the harem of the Sultan, and of property which he valued fully as much as he did the person of his child. His rage knew no bounds. The most active measures were set on foot; but no clue could be found to her retreat; and as any levity of conduct, once discovered in a Turkish woman, renders her comparatively valueless, Calil at last smothered his disappointment in the best manner he could; and affecting utter indifference upon the subject, the surprise of the event soon passed away, and the name of the beautiful Chezmé was apparently forgotten in Adrianople.

## CHAPTER XIV.

It was with feelings of unfeigned delight that Calil Pacha watched the departure of the Christian Ambassador and his followers, as they slowly wended their way through the streets of Adrianople; and for many successive days, every moment that he could steal from his duties, and attendance upon the Sultan, was devoted to a conference with Levi, the Jewish merchant, who usually undertook the task of converting into gold the valuable presents which the Vizier received.

On the present occasion, it was more than ever necessary to dispose of the jewels bestowed by Elphenor, so that should any unforeseen accident occur, they might not be recognised as having belonged to the Imperial treasure. This could only be done by sending them to a distance for sale; yet to trust them to others, was a step to which the Vizier was very reluctant to consent. At last

it was arranged that they should be confided to the care of a party of Jewish merchants going to Venice and Genoa for the purposes of trade; and having taken measures of precaution, which he imagined left no doubt of their security, Calil gave himself up to the delight of having fully succeeded in his schemes. If for a moment the loss of his daughter recurred unpleasantly to his mind, he quickly consoled himself by the reflection that it was his fate; and adored the wisdom of Alláh, who, at the moment when he had permitted the loss of so much wealth, by the mysterious disappearance of Chezmé, had not failed amply to compensate him for the misfortune, by disposing the heart of Elphenor to bestow upon him treasures of far greater value than those which she had taken. Unbounded was the belief of Calil in the doctrine of predestination; and in this particular he did not essentially differ from his countrymen, whose infatuation upon this point offers a strange contradiction to the deference with which Mussulmen blindly adhere to the most minute details of their exacting and complicated creed. It is explicitly declared to them, by the words of Mahomet himself, that the doctrine of

predestination is not applicable to temporal affairs, but merely regards a certain portion of the human species, who, being predestined before their birth to eternal happiness or punishment, can by no means control their fate.

This is distinctly set forth in the articles of their belief; and yet against the express commands of their Prophet, and in open defiance of the most learned expounders of their law, the whole Turkish nation indulges blindly in the dogma of predestination, scarcely admitting the power of freedom of will. Not only are the actions of individuals regulated by this belief, but the whole body, social and political, is so completely under the influence of fatalism, that the dictates of common sense, and the example of other countries are alike unheeded. Plunged in a state of lethargy, with them the spirit of resignation degenerates into passive indifference. Attributing all to the will of God—a celestial and invisible influence attending and directing each human being, all resources—improvements—or suggestions of prudence and forethought are absolutely neglected. The nation is enervated, and civilization retarded by a blind reliance on a falla-

cious doctrine to such a point, that a Mussulman can behold with placid indifference his city reduced to ashes, and a sovereign mark unmoved the ravages of the pestilence which desolates his kingdom, nor take one step towards the prevention of a recurrence of the same disasters, from the conviction that all has been pre-ordained. Strong as is this general delusion, it naturally increases or diminishes in violence, according to the amount of belief in fatalism professed by the reigning Sultan, and those highest in authority under him.

Notwithstanding the superiority of intellect by which Mahomet II. was eminently distinguished, his mind was deeply tinged by superstition, and the doctrine of predestination was perhaps the only point of belief which with any sincerity he professed. Like his namesake the Prophet, who on any emergency always produced a leaf of the Koran, which he pretended to have that moment received from heaven, Mahomet generally contrived so to mould his religious opinions and observances, as to impose upon the credulity of his people, and further his own ends.

If the Sultan had been guilty of insincerity in

the profession of faith in predestination, his Vizier, Calil Pacha, could not be accused of ever having harboured a doubt of the truth of the doctrine. It was a comfortable and convenient creed, well suited to the lax morals of the Vizier. Beneath the shelter of its tenets, he could plunder the poor, and prey upon the rich with impunity; and so fixed was his belief in fate, that he never hesitated in the commission of the greatest crimes, having been assured by an astrologer whom he consulted, that his latter days should be spent in peace and security. This conviction was most consolatory, and always supported the courage of the Vizier in the dangerous situations in which he was too often placed by his own iniquity. Calil Pacha was a consummate hypocrite: a zealous Mussulman in public, he consoled himself for the privations he was obliged to undergo, by the most unbounded private indulgence.

Mahomet II., who himself never tasted wine, had endeavoured to enforce the law of the Prophet which strictly forbids its use, by fulminating against all who offended on this point decrees of the most arbitrary nature. He ordained that all who were

detected in the act of drinking it, should be seized, and melted lead poured down their throats; and such was the determination with which he endeavoured to eradicate the vice of drunkenness from among his people, that one day when he was perambulating the city in disguise, in order to discover whether his commands were fully obeyed, having espied an unfortunate Mussulman upon the bank of the river vainly attempting to conceal his intoxication, the Sultan, indignant at this flagrant infringement of the law, without hesitation, drew the bow he carried, and pierced the offender with an arrow between the shoulders, leaving him to find a watery grave beneath the waves of the Maritza.

Even this example could not terrify the infatuated Vizier, who, consoling himself with the reflection that the unfortunate drunkard must have been predestined to die in this manner, continued his own evil practices in secret. The use of opium had also been forbidden by Mahomet; nevertheless the Vizier always carried a little box in which the interdicted drug was concealed, and frequently contrived to quit the presence of his master for a few moments, even upon state occasions, that he

might swallow a portion of this favourite stimulant. Great difficulty existed as to the indulgence of his passion for wine. As Mahomet had caused the shops to be demolished where it had formerly been sold, it could only be procured by stealth; and a confidential slave, named Hassan, was employed by the Vizier to convey as much of it as was required for the day, to his palace, where the same slave always served it to the Vizier in cups of brass or silver, in order that its colour might not attract the attention of the other servants in attendance. But this was at the hour of the usual repast. It was only in the evening that Calil could venture to indulge to excess. Then, secure from interruption, and released from his attendance upon his master, he would retire to his sleeping apartment, where Hassan had already prepared a supper of the most highly seasoned dishes, intermixed with olives, caviar, anchovies, sardines, and every description of salted meat and fish that could create thirst. It seldom happened that the Vizier was sensible of the manner in which these orgies terminated. He was obliged to trust to Hassan, who, as he performed the office of barber the next morning, usually gave

him a detailed account of all that he could not himself remember, at which the Vizier always laughed heartily, while Hassan was rewarded with a piece of gold.

One night, however, the consequences of his habitual indulgence in this vice threatened to be of a more serious nature than usual. Having drank deeply of some delicious Cyprus wine, which Hassan had procured for him, the Vizier had retired to rest, and having fallen into a deep sleep, was suddenly aroused by a violent knocking at his door, which he had secured within to prevent detection. For some time he was only sufficiently awake to be sensible of the noise, without knowing from whence it proceeded. He turned restlessly on his pillow—still the sound continued; while his burning temples throbbed, and every stroke seemed to fall upon his excited brain, until it reeled beneath the agony.

"Pity me—spare me," he cried, as, still in his sleep, he imagined himself already in the tomb, where the Turks suppose the blue and black angels, Munnker and Nadir, beat the heads of those who die in sin, with red-hot hammers, till the day of judgment. "Pity me—let me rest a moment—my head is on fire. I believed in God—

and that Mahomet was his Prophet. I did not die in sin—Oh! oh!" he exclaimed, with a shriek, as a louder blow upon the door shook the walls of the room, and reverberated through his brain with so fierce a pang, that at length the Vizier awoke.

"Where am I?" he cried, in a helpless tone, at the same time groping about with his hands—but in another moment the voice of Hassan, calling upon him to unfasten the door, reached his bewildered senses. His recollection slowly returned, although it was some time before the dizziness of his head would permit him to reach the door, upon which Hassan still kept up an unmerciful shower of blows. At length the Vizier contrived to open it; and as the light, which Hassan carried in his hand, fell upon the figure which presented itself to his view, the habitual gravity and reverence of a slave for his master almost gave way, and Hassan cast his eyes upon the ground without venturing to take a second look. The rotund figure of Calil was displayed to advantage by the cotton vest and drawers in which all Mussulmen pass the night; but in the fever which the wine had produced, the arrangements of the Vizier's sleeping dress were sadly disturbed; his drawers were pushed up above

the knee, his sleeves above the elbow, while his shaven head was divested of cap or turban. It was some time before he could understand the words which were addressed to him, and he continued standing in the middle of the room, with his lips apart, his knees bent, and his hands stretched out—a picture of the helpless state of idiotcy to which his degrading passion had reduced him. At length, Hassan, whose vigilance had protected his master from exposure, and who now busied himself in collecting the various articles of his dress, succeeded in explaining to him, that the Sultan desired his immediate presence.

"Holy Alláh!" exclaimed the unfortunate Vizier; "how unlucky that his Highness should want me! Woe is me! doubtless his wrath is kindled—what have I done?"

"So please you," suggested Hassan, "it may be an affair of state. There is no danger ——"

"Danger—oh! yes, there is always danger at unusual hours," said Calil with a groan! "What have I done? But I have done nothing—nothing—" he repeated, with the stupid stare of drunkenness; and then, as if to satisfy himself of his safety, he began to recapitulate the twelve deadly sins which,

if he avoids, a Mussulman thinks himself secure of salvation.

As the Vizier proceeded to give proofs of his innocence, Hassan with some difficulty endeavoured to adjust the dress of his master, listening as he did so to the assurance which Calil repeated after every sin, that, as it had never been committed by him, so neither his life, here nor hereafter, could be in any danger! The eleventh sin had just been enumerated, when, as the Vizier had pronounced the words, "Neither have I drank,"—his eye rested upon a table, the contents of which seemed to rise giant-like before his eyes. With a look of agony he pointed to the empty flask, exclaiming, as he trembled from head to foot—

"Oh! Hassan, it is the wine! Woe is me! It is the wine! Alas! alas! that delicious Cyprus—and the Shiraz—it was nectar. Who would have thought it could have brought this trouble upon me? Oh! Hassan! good Hassan! thou wilt be faithful; thou wilt swear, if called upon, that it was drugs from the Apothecary. Here—here is another piece of gold—and take this ring, for thou art faithful, good Hassan!"

"Nay—my lord need not be afraid," replied

Hassan, carefully depositing the piece of gold in his vest; "one sin out of twelve is not much. Alláh is merciful! And besides, has not the Prophet declared that all—even the twelve deadly sins—shall be forgiven to a true believer?"

"True—true, good Hassan! worthy Hassan!" replied the Vizier, quickly; "the Prophet has said so. Faith will wash out sin—and I have faith. I believe there is no God but God, and Mahomet is his Prophet! Thanks, good Hassan! Yes, I have faith."

Satisfied with this profession, which the absurdity of the Mahomedan creed declares to be all that is necessary to secure salvation, when pronounced even at the eleventh hour, by the greatest criminal, the Vizier proceeded to finish his toilet. He put on his robe of state, lined with fur; and filling a goblet of gold with coins sufficient to make the customary offering, he hastily swallowed some iced sherbet, which the attentive Hassan had provided; and having regained somewhat of his accustomed composure, proceeded to attend upon his sovereign.

## CHAPTER XV.

It needed all the deep abstraction of mind, under which Elphenor laboured, to prevent his perceiving the change which had taken place in the manner of his young favourite, Demetrius of Ypsara. No one would have recognised the gay youth, who had entered the city of Adrianople in a spirit of buoyancy almost beyond control, as they looked upon the sorrowful and downcast mien of him who rode by the side of the Ambassador, on his return to Constantinople. Dismal and self-reproving were, indeed, the thoughts which crowded upon the mind of Demetrius. He had learned from common report only, of the death of Ayba, and the flight of Chezmé; but beyond the simple facts, he had not been able to gain any intelligence.

The disappearance of the daughter of the Vizier was a mystery into which, since her father had

disdained farther inquiry, no one sought to penetrate; and the death of a slave was, in that country, an incident of too trivial a nature to excite attention. Thus the manner in which poor Ayba had died, remained a secret from Demetrius, and he was spared the additional horror of believing that it was through his means that she had been induced to commit self-destruction. While ignorant of the manner of her death, the heart of Demetrius could not disavow the belief that her love for him had been the cause of much sorrow to Ayba; and deeply touched by the untimely fate of one so gentle and unhappy, he almost forgot his own grief, and the anxiety with which the disappearance of Chezmé had filled him. From the moment he had parted from her in the gardens of the harem, he had never again beheld the form he so ardently sought. In vain had he lingered in the streets and bazaars, which had formerly served them with pretexts for meeting; the voice he would have recognised even in a whisper, never again met his ear. Worn out by anxiety and love, he would sometimes abandon all hope of meeting in the city, and taking a caique, linger for hours

upon the river, in the hope that she whom he sought might revisit the spot where they had parted; nothing was visible but the steep wall, surmounted by the balustrade of marble, from which he had thrown himself upon the bosom of the waters, and the gilded roof of the kiosk peeping out from its shelter of flowers, backed by the tall cypress trees, which seemed to stand like its guards around it.

The startling intelligence of the flight of Chezmé appeared, in some measure, to account for the silence and solitude to which he had been thus suddenly condemned. The news burst upon his ear like a clap of thunder. So unexpectedly had it come, and so quickly had all trace of Chezmé vanished, that sometimes even Demetrius, as he turned from the city where events so strange had occurred, almost doubted whether the form he had so madly worshipped, had been a reality, or merely a vision of beauty unknown upon the earth. As this thought frequently recurred, a glance at the ring which Chezmé had placed upon his finger would re-assure him, and, smiling at his fancies, the heart of Demetrius beat once again with gladness, when he

remembered her parting words, " Chezmé will one day redeem her ring !"

There is comfort in hope, however distant ; and the sigh of Demetrius was less sad as he dwelt upon this promise, though, as the cavalcade wound slowly on, and he turned to take a last look at the city ere it was shut out from his view by the rising ground, tears rushed to his eyes, for the white walls and tall cypress and cedar of the cemetery gleamed for a moment in the noon-day sun, and he thought of the poor Greek girl, who, deceived by his idle protestations of love, had so often watched for his approach beneath the same trees which now shadowed her tomb. Dark and terrible was this thought ; for Demetrius was young, and not yet become hardened in vice, or in that worldly stoicism which deadens remorse, and steels the heart against sympathy.

His attention, however, was suddenly withdrawn from his reflections by the voice of Elphenor, who, having for some time complained of indisposition, was now evidently in such an alarming state of illness, that it became impossible for him to proceed. It was the second day of their journey ;

and from his anxiety to reach Constantinople as speedily as possible, Elphenor, soon after they had quitted Adrianople, left the main body of his attendants, desiring them to follow slowly, and with Demetrius, and a few followers, had ridden forward, apparently with more speed than prudence. The violent heat of the sun had materially increased the fever under which he had, in secret, suffered for many days, and which had been occasioned by the deep anxiety which circumstances had obliged him to repress, and the harassing delay of his return, which, at such a time, he felt to be of importance to the cause of his sovereign. Struggling against the weakness which every moment increased, Elphenor had hoped, by extraordinary exertion, to accomplish his journey: but it could not be; and by the time when he acknowledged he could go no farther, he was in such a state of exhaustion that two attendants could scarcely support him in his saddle.

Demetrius looked around in vain. The tract of country which they had reached was the most desolate portion of the journey; not a village or habitation appeared in sight, and they were forced to

proceed, for some distance, beneath the rays of a burning sun, at the imminent danger of the life of Elphenor, until, having reached the brow of a high hill, Demetrius beheld with delight the white walls of a large building at no great distance. With renewed hopes they hastened forward—a narrow path through a deep and sandy soil led to the door of what appeared to be a prison; but Demetrius observing the strange attitude of a man sitting upon a stone, with his eyes closed and one arm fastened with a thong of leather far above his head, perceived, by the long hair and pallid hue of his face, that they had arrived at a convent of Dervishes.

"Can we obtain admittance within the convent, for one who is in danger of death?" inquired Demetrius, as, springing from his horse, he uncovered his head, and approached reverently, in the hope of conciliating the extraordinary being whom he addressed. Startled by the sound of a voice so near him, the Dervish opened his eyes for an instant, but closed them again with a shudder, as they rested on the unhallowed form of Demetrius, clothed in the bright and handsome dress which was the fashion of the day.

" Holy father," said Demetrius, " will you not assist us?"

" *Lá ilhahi il Alláh*—There is no God but God," exclaimed the Dervish, without seeming to hear the question addressed to him.

" For pity's sake, admit us," entreated Demetrius.

" *Yá Alláh*—oh God!—*Yá cahhar*—oh! avenging God," again exclaimed the Dervish, with a prolonged shudder at committing the involuntary sin of listening to the words of a Christian.

" Will you not speak to me?" cried Demetrius in despair; for as he spoke in the Turkish language he was aware that he was understood, and that nothing but a vow of silence could arrest the well known charity and benevolence of a Mussulman to the sick or distressed.

" Tell me, at least, if I may enter the walls of the convent without offence?" he added humbly.

" *Yá hákk*—oh just God!—*Yá häik*—oh living God!" again ejaculated the Dervish, closing his eyes more firmly than ever. Demetrius, despairing of success, left him to mutter over the seven articles of his belief, by which a Dervish hopes to atone

for sin and avoid temptation, and making a sign to the attendants to remain where they were—as, having lifted Elphenor from his horse, they stood with their mantles extended, to screen him from the sun as he lay upon the ground, Demetrius boldly entered the convent.

It was a square enclosure surrounded by a sort of low portico, or covered walk. Demetrius started back with horror at the first sight which met his view. A man, apparently in the last stage of consumption, was suspended by his long hair to a beam attached to the roof of the portico; his feet scarcely touched the ground, and his arms were strapped tightly behind him. For a moment Demetrius believed that he was dead, but on approaching he perceived, by the large drops of perspiration, mingled with the blood that oozed from the roots of his hair from the violence of the tension, that the unfortunate man was indeed living. He appeared scarcely to have reached the prime of life, but so wan and emaciated was his face, that it was quite transparent; and the lips, drawn down at the corners with an expression of patient agony, were blue and livid, and barely concealed the teeth beneath them, every

one of which was marked out with horrible distinctness upon the faded skin.

It seemed like mockery to address one in such a state; and, moving on, Demetrius came to another man who, sitting upon the ground with his head between his knees, did not appear in such a state of exhaustion. But vain was all attempt at conversation; and had it not been for the words "*Yá Alláh*—oh God!—*Yá hou*—He who alone is God," which were repeated on all sides as those wretched fanatics who had committed the involuntary sin of listening to, or looking at, any thing contrary to their vow, endeavoured to make their peace with Heaven, Demetrius would have imagined himself in the presence of a deaf and dumb community.

Horrible was the scene in which he stood! On every side these poor misguided wretches were intent on performing their self-imposed penance. Several were hanging a little distance from the ground, suspended by one arm, others by one leg; while some were tied up by both feet, and lay with their heads upon the earth, the blood gushing from their ears and nostrils. All were apparently in agony, and yet not a groan, not a complaint was

heard. If an involuntary sob burst from some breast unable to endure its load of torture, it was quickly followed by the exclamations of "*Yá Alláh! Yá hou! Yá hákk!*" uttered in a tone of the most abject supplication.

Filled with horror at the idea, that so many human beings could be found, even in the small space of one convent, who imagined such acts of barbarity could be acceptable to a God of mercy, Demetrius, without further attempt at eliciting permission from any of those present, passed on to the interior of the building, in the hope of meeting with some of its inmates unshackled by the immediate performance of any act of penance. In this, for some time, he was disappointed; he only seemed to have passed from one lunatic asylum to another: for in all the cells which were open he espied the performance of some act of austerity; while, in a large room into which he walked without ceremony, many men, whose grizzled locks betokened an age which should have brought wisdom, were hopping on one leg round the room; some sitting on their knees, swaying their bodies to and fro; others were running up and down, incessantly repeating the

well-known words, " *Lá ilhahi il Alláh !*—There is no God but God !" and a few were dancing in a sort of measured step, as they lowly chaunted the same words in a monotonous tone.

At last, as in despair Demetrius was about to depart, a rosy and well-fed face caught his eye; and though crowned with the high cap of the Dervishes, Demetrius fancied that a countenance so at variance with the spirit of the tribe betokened a heart capable of human sensations.

" For the love of God !" exclaimed Demetrius, hastily pushing open the door, from behind which the Dervish had been stealthily gazing upon the contortions of the devoted within the room of penance, " have mercy upon a sick person, and receive us, if it be only for the night, within your walls. You shall not lack reward for your trouble," he added hastily, as, perceiving that the man condescended to listen and to look at him, he drew from his vest a purse of gold, and placed it in the hand of the Dervish.

" What can I do to serve you ?" asked the man civilly, while the decided foreign accent in which he spoke the Turkish words, caused Demetrius to

start with surprise. Unwilling, however, to show that he had discovered anything which the supposed Dervish might wish to conceal, Demetrius briefly explained his business, and received the comforting assurance that the wants of Elphenor and his suite should be attended to.

Without further delay, the Dervish accompanied Demetrius to the gate, where the sick man lay; and having caused him to be lifted up in the arms of two inferior servants, whom he had summoned to assist him, he was about to enter the court by which Demetrius had gained access to the interior of the convent.

"Is there no other way?" involuntarily exclaimed Demetrius, as he shuddered on remembering the horrible objects which must meet the eye of Elphenor. "The sick are fanciful, and cannot bear strange sights as we can," he added, in an apologetic tone, fearing to offend the prejudices of his new acquaintance.

The Dervish merely turned upon him a quiet smile, and, motioning to his attendants, led the way round to another entrance. Demetrius soon had the happiness of seeing Elphenor placed in a

cool and secluded cell, and a bed prepared for him, which, if homely, was at least preferable to remaining longer in the open air, exposed to the heat of the sun. The Dervish, who appeared to act as the physician of the establishment, now felt the pulse of the sick man, and gravely ejaculating, "*Yá Alláh!*" and "*Yá hou!*" a sufficient number of times, even while a slight expression of contempt might have been detected lurking beneath the assumed air of veneration with which he pronounced the words, he administered to his patient a cooling draught, to allay the thirst from which he suffered; and, leaving Demetrius to watch by the bedside of his friend, withdrew, promising a speedy return.

## CHAPTER XVI.

All that night Demetrius watched by the couch of Elphenor, and by the dim light of the solitary lamp which had been placed outside the unclosed door of the wretched cell, he could see the dusky forms of the Dervishes as they flitted along the passage in their long black dresses, while the hum of subdued voices, repeating their words of prayer, continued incessant. Nothing could exceed the apparent misery and discomfort of these self-afflicted devotees; and Demetrius, as he looked upon them, could scarcely believe that infatuation could lead human beings into so false an estimate of happiness or duty. As the day dawned, he hoped that, the penance of the night being concluded, a reprieve might be granted to themselves, by the fanatics by whom he was surrounded; but he was mistaken. These credulous enthusiasts, always in a state bordering on insanity, had no sooner com-

pleted one penance thán they began another; and the sound of tears and sobs were intermingled with howls and yells, and exclamations of "*Yá Alláh!*" and "*Yá hou!*" in every gradation of tone that it was possible to conceive.

Fortunately, the continued noise did not reach the ear of Elphenor; for the specifics which had been administered to him, had had the effect of producing a lethargic sleep, from which it did not seem easy to arouse him. Satisfied with the look of confidence with which the Dervish who had prescribed for him, pronounced the disorder to be favourably proceeding, Demetrius resigned his place to an attendant; and following his new friend, who had invited him to pay him a visit in his department of the monastery, beheld with surprise, that he conducted him to a very comfortable corner by the side of the kitchen fire.

"I fancied you were a physician," exclaimed Demetrius, as he saw the Dervish beginning with his own hands to prepare some meat which lay upon a table before him.

"So I am, when it suits me," replied the man, with a sly look at his visitor; "I have travelled

far and wide, and have some knowledge of medicine; but in ordinary times I am a cook."

"A cook!" replied Demetrius, with a smile; "I should not have thought that the austerities of your order permitted much indulgence in the pleasures of the table?"

"You are right enough there," replied the Dervish. "The monastery belongs to the order of the Rufayis, the strictest of all the orders of Dervishes; and even those who are not bound by a vow of abstinence, have never more than two dishes on their table, and those of the plainest sort."

"Then, of what use are the number of cooks I see there employed?" asked Demetrius, pointing to an inner room, where several persons were apparently occupied in culinary affairs.

"They are novices, studying for admission," replied the Dervish; "for though it may appear strange to you, it is the rule that every one who aspires to belong to our order, should serve in the lowest offices of the kitchen, for a thousand and one days. I myself have passed through such a noviciate, and have reached the dignity of *Aschdjy*

*Baschy*, or chief of the kitchen, and have the privilege of recommending to the Scheik such as are candidates for admission."

"But surely," said Demetrius, "you do not practise all the austerities of the order?"

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed the Dervish, smiling; "you forget that penance is voluntary. It may suit some people's taste, but it does not happen to suit mine."

"Then how is it that you seem to have so much power here?" asked Demetrius, "for I have always heard that those who inflicted most torture on themselves, were esteemed the highest among the Dervishes."

"Hush!" said the man, putting his finger on his lips as he approached Demetrius; "there are secrets in all houses. The Scheik is my friend. He is held as infallible; and in the privacy of his cell, a good supper is sometimes acceptable—you understand."

"Perfectly," replied Demetrius, with a smile. "Still I cannot comprehend why you should have chosen a situation where so many painful objects must be constantly before your eyes?"

" One must live," answered the happy-looking Dervish, with a shrug of his shoulders. " I have travelled over half the world. I have been a barber, a baker, a lawyer, a doctor, a soldier, and a tailor; but, believe me, not one of these professions is equal to that of religion. Only persuade people that you know better how to take care of their souls than they do themselves, and all that they possess is your's."

" And pray, how do you manage to make it a profitable business?" asked Demetrius, much amused at the frankness of the man.

" Oh, very easily," replied he. " Though begging is forbidden, yet receiving alms is allowable to our order; and as every one is obliged to give into the public treasury all that he collects, it amounts, in the course of the year, to a very considerable sum."

" Too considerable, I suppose, for the wants of the community," observed Demetrius laughing.

" Exactly so," replied the Dervish with a mock attempt at gravity; " and as my office combines that of treasurer, it is my duty to see that any surplus there may be, should be well applied."

" I am no longer surprised," said Demetrius, " at your choice of a profession. I conclude you will not be in a hurry to abandon it."

" Not as long as credulity and hypocrisy make it as valuable as it is now," replied the Dervish.

" I know not why," he continued, fixing his eyes on the face of his guest, " I have trusted you so readily with my secrets—but something in your countenance bespeaks honesty—you will not betray me."

" Never," said Demetrius warmly. " The ties of gratitude forbid it, as well as those of honour."

" I believe you," replied the Dervish. " And now," he continued, as he set before Demetrius the dish he had been preparing during his conversation, " when you have breakfasted, if you will consent to conceal yourself behind the door of the great room, you can witness the admittance of a novice into the order. This day is the appointed time; and, being Thursday, is also the day of divers exercises, which may interest, if not amuse you."

Delighted with this permission, Demetrius hastened to finish his meal, and following his friend the cook, was conducted by him to a

recess close to the door, from which he could easily perceive all that took place in the room within.

" Is it not permitted to strangers to witness the mysteries of your sect?" asked Demetrius, seeing that the Dervish hesitated.

" They are not forbidden," replied the latter. " That is, on consideration of bestowing alms upon the community. But ——"

" I understand," said Demetrius, showing a purse well-lined with gold. " Let me see the mysteries of which I have heard so much, and this shall be your's—but why must we conceal ourselves?"

" You may, perhaps," see things that will startle you," replied the Dervish; " and it is better that you should remain concealed, as any exclamation would be deemed an offence. And, now I will leave you, for I must fulfil my part in the ceremony."

In a few minutes the room began to fill. An old man, who was evidently the Scheik, or chief of the convent, was conducted with much respect by several Dervishes, and placed in the angle of the

sofa, the place of honour amongst the Mussulmen. The candidate for admission then entered, accompanied by the *Aschdjy Baschy*, or chief of the kitchen, who, placing one hand upon the forehead, and the other upon the nape of the neck of the novice as he knelt before the Scheik, held his cap above his head, while he repeated the Persian distich ordained by the founder of the order:— "It is true happiness, and real grandeur, to close the heart against human passions. It is the victory given to the faithful, by the grace of our holy Prophet."

These words were followed by a hymn; after which, the neophyte received his cap; and retiring to the middle of the room, around which the Dervishes were kneeling on sheep-skins, he, with the *Aschdjy Baschy*, placed themselves in a posture of humility, with their hands crossed upon their breasts, their heads bent towards the left shoulder, and the left foot carefully concealed by the right. This was followed by an exhortation to the novice, and a prayer of some duration; after which the Scheik rising, exclaimed, in a loud voice, "Let us give praise to Alláh!" and the whole as-

sembly vociferated the words "Alláh!" and "Hou," until Demetrius was nearly deafened by the noise.

This concluded the ceremony; the new Dervish kissed the hand of the Scheik, and was, in his turn, embraced by all his brethren, who then dispersed; and the chief cook, gliding to the side of Demetrius, informed him that the holy exercises were about to begin.

The Scheik, placing himself in a niche at one side of the room, Demetrius first observed that it contained a small altar, beneath which was a brazier full of live coals; and around, upon the wall, were ranged a variety of knives, daggers, and swords, suspended by the handles. As many of the Dervishes as chose to take part in the exercises having seated themselves on the floor in a circle, the Scheik began by reciting the seven mysterious sentences of their creed, which commenced by the exclamations which Demetrius had already heard of "*Lá ilhahi—il Alláh—yá Alláh—yá hou*," &c. &c. &c., to which the assembly answered in chorus, ejaculating, in a tone so unearthly, the words "Alláh," and "Hou," that the dismal sounds fell with a chill on the heart of Demetrius.

Suddenly the circle appeared transformed into maniacs; they rose from the ground, and dashing off their caps and robes, twined their arms together, pressing close to each other's sides, and began a movement first from right to left, then backwards and forwards, executed with such precision, that they seemed to form but one body. Every instant the velocity of the movement, and the loudness of the tone in which they exclaimed "*Yá Alláh*," and "*Yá hou*," increased, and continued so violent that at last some of their number fell exhausted upon the floor. Each time that this occurred the Scheik clapped his hands, and encouraging them to proceed, their motions became more and more frantic; their cries now changed to yells; and the exhaustion they had previously manifested gave way to a frenzy which was terrific to behold. They jumped, screamed, and swung round like madmen; but the blood of Demetrius ran cold as he beheld several of the most excited rush to the altar, and seizing the knives and daggers which hung there, thrust them into the fire. As soon as they were red hot they presented them to the Scheik, who breathing lightly upon them

recited some words, and invoked the protection of Ahmed Rufayi, the founder of the order; after which he returned them to those who pressed forward most eagerly.

Then began the dreadful scene, upon which Demetrius had no sooner cast his eyes, than a cry of horror, which he was unable to suppress, burst from his lips.

"As you value your life, be silent," whispered the Dervish, as he placed his hand upon the mouth of Demetrius. "In this state, even a Dervish would not be safe from their fury, did they imagine his zeal was inferior to their own."

With a groan Demetrius turned again, to observe the excitement of the wretched fanatics, who, in the doctrine of their religious ecstacy, were inflicting the most fearful tortures on themselves. Some of those who had received the heated irons, applied them to their foreheads, cheeks, lips, or arms; while others held them in their mouths until cool. Those who had not been fortunate enough to obtain them, seized upon the daggers that were left unheated, and plunged them into different parts of their body, leaving them sticking in the wounds, as

they ran round the room, ejaculating the name of Alláh! Not a groan nor complaint was heard! with unflinching courage they continued their barbarous self-mutilation; and if any did sink under the infliction, he was hastily laid upon the sofa which surrounded the apartment, while the rest continued their fiendish rites, screaming, singing, dancing—all wound up to a pitch of insanity, that made them more resemble an assembly of demons than human creatures.

"I can bear no more," said Demetrius in a voice of anguish, as he drew the arm of the Dervish towards him.

Just then, one of the unhappy wretches approached the spot where they stood, and seizing a pair of pincers that hung upon the wall, began to pull out his teeth—a favourite demonstration of devotion to the Prophet, who lost two at the famous battle of Uhhud. Several teeth had already fallen a sacrifice to the fury of the intoxicated enthusiast, when his strength yielding to the anguish, his hand refused the barbarian office, and he sank fainting upon the floor, already stained and smeared with the blood of his companions.

Even the Dervish, who stood by Demetrius, shuddered as he looked upon the wan countenance of him who lay at his feet; and turning to his companion, who, sick with horror, was standing motionless by his side, whispered to him to follow him; and gliding unperceived through the half-open door, they withdrew from the dreadful scene, though for some time they could hear the frantic cries and exclamations of the fanatics, and louder still, the voice of the old Scheik, as he encouraged them, by words and gestures, whenever their strength appeared to fail.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Demetrius, "is it possible that an old man should like to look upon such a sight? and yet yon aged Scheik seems absolutely to enjoy it?"

"He does, indeed, enjoy it," replied the Dervish; "every person who joins the sect pays a tribute to the public treasury. As only a certain number can be admitted at a time, each Dervish that falls a sacrifice to his notions of religion, leaves a vacancy for which there are many candidates. Now you understand why the Scheik is so anxious to encourage an exercise, from which many will never

recover; and even if they should withstand the torture, you know I am a physician as well as a cook—a quieting draught is easily administered."

"You do not murder them?" cried Demetrius, starting in horror from the side of his companion.

"I only obey my superior, when he judges it fitting to put a stop to their pain; that is not murder, you know," replied the Dervish, with an expression of carelessness that made Demetrius shudder, as he reflected on the state of Elphenor, whose life had been entrusted to this man.

"For the love of God, tell me," he said in a tone of entreaty, "is this horrible practice common in this country? and he who lies sick in yonder cell ——"

"Is in no danger whatever," interrupted the Dervish, laughing; "he who claims our pity, is safe within these walls."

"But what proof can you give me, that I should trust you?" said Demetrius, with hesitation.

"The same security," replied the Dervish, "which, in return for your promise, induced me to trust you with the secrets of our order."

"My honour!" began Demetrius, as he produced his purse——

"Is but a Christian boast," interrupted the Dervish, with a coolness that sent the hot blood to the cheek of Demetrius, "empty and vain. We Mussulmen have a surer guide—a reliance upon which tells me you will not betray me, while it might convince you that I could have no wish to injure you."

"And what is that?" asked Demetrius.

"*Self interest*," replied the Dervish, taking the purse; and as he turned away, a smile of contempt played upon his lips, at his frank avowal of the lesson which his commerce with mankind had taught him.

## CHAPTER XVII.

There is no moment in the life of a Grand Vizier so awful as that in which he receives, at an unusual hour, a summons to the presence of his sovereign. The reason for such a summons may vary, from the most urgent state business to a trifling detail of parade which may have just occurred to the fancy of the despot; or, it may regard the life or death of some person hitherto high in favour, while it has not unfrequently been the forerunner of the disgrace of the Viziers themselves.

Calil Pacha well knew, that if the first words from the mouth of Mahomet were to contain the sentence of his punishment and death, he would still be summoned to hear his doom in the royal presence, and be received with the same form as was customary. It did not, therefore, at all diminish his uneasiness, as he approached the

chamber of Mahomet, to perceive that almost all the usual attendants were in their places; and he even fancied there was an air of mystery in every countenance on which he looked. The two hideous dwarfs, who sat upon the lowest of the gilded steps which led to the apartment of the monarch, could scarcely repress a grin, and the Vizier shuddered, as he caught the bright black eye of one of the mutes who guarded the door, and fancied he read in it a history of the bowstring, and other deeds of darkness, in which these speechless guardians of the tyrant were not unfrequently employed.

Summoning all his courage, he at last entered the presence of his sovereign. Having made three prostrations, he was about to embrace the feet of his master, when he was agreeably surprised by Mahomet covering them with the end of his robe, and extending to him the palm of his hand to kiss. This was a distinction seldom accorded to any but the mufti; and the unexpected condescension of the Sultan caused such a reaction in the feelings of the Vizier that he well nigh burst into tears. By a great effort, he contrived to offer

the present which he had brought; and though Mahomet had never before departed from the singular and degrading custom by which the Sultan condescends to receive presents from all the courtiers who approach him, yet at this moment he seemed to have laid aside his usual habits.

" I do not wish to receive any gifts," he said kindly; " I would much rather bestow some in return for good services. See, I had ordered these to be prepared;" and he pointed to a robe, lined with rich sables, and a magnificent sword, which lay upon a stool of silver at his feet. " I ask only, in return, a distinct answer to my question."

" Your Majesty has only to ask—your faithful slave Calil will answer to the best of his ability."

" How long will it be ere my troops are ready to march upon Constantinople?"

Struck by the extraordinary coincidence of this having been the very question, for the answer to which Elphenor had paid so high a price, Calil again began to tremble, as he replied:

" The moment that my lord commands, his slaves are ready."

" It is well," replied the Sultan; " Constan-

tinople must be mine. It is my only thought—my only wish. I pant—I burn to possess it. Look at that bed," he continued, as he pointed to the bed upon which the splendid coverings of crimson satin, worked with pearls, lay twisted and confused among the cushions and pillows.

" Look at that bed; all the night I have turned upon it, but without finding rest. Thus shall I be, until I have the Christian city in my possession."

" Assuredly, the same God who has given a part will not deny to your Highness the remainder of the Roman empire," said Calil humbly.

" We have men, and we have arms—but the Romans have gold," said the Sultan, who was now perfectly aware of the treachery of his Vizier, and only waited for fitting time and proof to bring him to punishment.

" Your Highness may have sufficient to purchase more than one empire," said Calil, evasively, " if he call upon his faithful people. Myself, with the rest of his slaves, are ready to sacrifice our lives, as well as our fortunes."

" Think you, if the people are called upon,

they will contribute much without the tax being enforced?" inquired the Sultan, pretending to accept the assurance of his minister.

"Are not thy slaves true believers, and is not every Mussulman bound by his religion to march against the infidels?"

"A good thought, by the Prophet," exclaimed the Sultan. "We will call it a religious war, and the whole body of the people will rise—Dervishes, Muezzins, Imams, and all, will march to the taking of Constantinople, for taken it must be! But say, has that Christian slave fulfilled his task? Is the great cannon ready?"

"It was finished this day," replied the Vizier, enchanted to find the conversation taking a new turn. "Yea, it is monstrous. I beheld the bullets weighed which are to be fired from it, and the weight of each was six hundred pounds. Thirty waggons, linked together, will scarcely hold it, and a team of sixty oxen will be required to draw it; so says the slave who made it."

"He shall have six hundred oxen, if he require it, so that it be safely planted before the walls of Constantinople. He said its force would batter

down walls thicker than those of Babylon. Let him look to it; if his words are not fulfilled, he shall himself be shot from its mouth."

"He will be in no hurry to rejoin his brethren," said Calil, anxious to appear unfriendly to the Christians; "the beggarly slaves almost starved him while he was in their service."

"By Alláh! they will have their just reward when his cannon thunders at their gates," cried Mahomet in delight. "But first, I myself will see it tried. Proclaim the day, lest any of the faithful should suffer, and I will go in state to see the trial, and from thence to the Mosque to offer up prayers for its success in this our holy undertaking. It is the cause of God and the Prophet! Let the people be warned, and all contributions carefully collected —we shall need much gold."

"My Lord shall be obeyed," said Calil. "But would it not be well," he added, hesitatingly, "if gold be really wanting, to make some small concession to the people's tastes?"

"Concession!" exclaimed the Sultan, haughtily.

"May the Sultan of the universe pardon his slave," replied Calil, meekly bending his forehead

to the ground. " I presume not to advise; but since the Mufti decided that the use of the newly-discovered berry, called coffee, was unlawful, the people have been discontented."

" The slaves! do they dare to murmur?—give them the bastinado till they submit," said Mahomet.

" Assuredly, your Highness is right: yet, on the eve of a war, such a trifle as the drinking of coffee were scarce worthy a thought. Those who had built kiosks when it was drank are ruined, if the decree of the Mufti is adhered to; the rest of the *Ulemah*, however, differ from their chief, and say, as the grain is not *consumed* by the fire, but merely *exposed* to it, it cannot be unlawful."

" Then let the people have liberty to drink it. You said it had been found by a holy man at Mecca?" observed the Sultan.

" My Lord is right. A Dervish, banished to the mountain, found the grain, and soon it was in such repute, that not only was he recalled, but the highest honours were heaped upon him. If in that holy place it was deemed lawful, why should the faithful followers of the Prophet elsewhere, be denied its use? I speak with humility—His Highness must command."

"I do command, and from this hour it shall be law."

So saying, the Sultan waved his hand, which was a signal that the audience was over; and Calil, making the customary obeisances, retreated from the royal presence; not forgetting, however, to carry with him the splendid presents he had received from his master.

The Vizier was in the highest spirits. Not only had he escaped all danger, but he had also contrived to carry a point which was of the greatest importance to him, the permission of the Sultan for the general use of coffee in his dominions. It had only been lately discovered and introduced by two Arab Dervishes into Constantinople. The enthusiasm of the nation had risen to a pitch, only equalled in after-days by the discovery of tobacco; and yet such was the prejudice of the Turkish government against any innovation, that the Mufti had instantly denounced, as places of abomination, the kiosks, or houses, where the people assembled to drink of the new drug, which declaration had occasioned much discontent in the city.

To Calil it had been a severe mortification, for unprepared for such an event, he had speculated

largely upon its success. Most of the kiosks had been secretly built through his means, and he had by his agents imported an immense quantity of coffee, which was bought at first with avidity, and which, even in those days, was made and drank exactly as is still the practice among the Turks. The Vizier retired to his apartment in the highest delight; yet, little did he imagine that the wily monarch, whom he appeared to control, had long since been filled with distrust towards him, and merely appeared to seek his advice, in order not to allow any minor affair to interfere with the execution of his grand design upon Constantinople.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

Many days elapsed before Elphenor was able to rise from the bed of sickness to which the deep anxiety of his mind had consigned him. Faithful to his word, the Dervish, who had undertaken his cure, attended him with unremitting care; and Demetrius, as he observed the solicitude which manifested itself involuntarily in the manner of the chief cook, whenever any change for the worse appeared to have taken place in his patient, felt almost ashamed to have ever harboured a doubt of the sincerity of his intentions.

Demetrius, however, in the first flush of generous youth, judged every body by himself. The practised eye of the cunning Dervish had at a glance detected that his visitors were of no ordinary rank: rudeness or neglect could not benefit him; while

from their gratitude, a rich harvest might be reaped. The expressions of anxiety to resume their journey that constantly escaped the lips of both Elphenor and Demetrius, redoubled the hopes of gain which had filled the bosom of the Dervish; and when, some days previous to that which he had named as the first upon which Elphenor would be able to mount his horse, he announced to his anxious guests, that no impediment to their departure now existed, the substantial proofs of the gratitude on which he had calculated, left him no reason to regret the path he had pursued.

It was with feelings of undisguised delight that the travellers once again resumed their journey. The horrors which Demetrius had witnessed within the walls of the Rufayis had left such an impression of loathing upon his mind, that he could not look upon the downcast eye and pallid face of a Dervish without a shudder; and long after the white walls of this den of hypocrisy and fanaticism were hidden from his view, the eternal exclamations of "*Yá Alláh!*" and "*Yá hou!*" by which the terrible silence of the tedious nights, during which he had watched by the couch of Elphenor, had been con-

stantly broken, seemed to ring again in his ear, and revive the hideous recollection of all that he had witnessed.

The first care of Demetrius, on their arrival at the convent, had been to send forward some of the attendants with an account of their situation, which was to be laid before the Emperor; but as they were still above eighty miles from Constantinople, and in a country where travelling was an operation of time and difficulty, it was not until they had entered upon the last day's journey that they were met by an officer, accompanied by the physician of Constantine, and an efficient guard, which had been sent by his orders for the succour and protection of Elphenor. Touched by the kindness which his sovereign manifested towards his person, Elphenor repressed the desire to hear some tidings of his wife and child, until he had questioned the officer as to the state of public opinion, with respect to the result of his mission to the Sultan. Having secretly dispatched to Constantine his own impression of the intentions of Mahomet, what was the dismay of Elphenor, when he learned that the whole city of Constantinople was one scene of joy and festivity. The result of

the conference between the Ambassador of the Emperor, and the Sultan, which had been declared to the public, had been announced in the most glowing and satisfactory terms; and Constantine, eager to allay all apprehensions, in the mind of the people, and also to indulge his own unbounded love for show, extravagance, and amusement, had immediately given orders that the public games, which were celebrated at the expense of the crown, should take place in the Hippodrome.

The enormous expense of these games rendered their celebration always a matter of doubtful policy; but, at this moment, with an almost exhausted treasury, it was absolute madness. Already the rejoicings had continued for several days, and were to terminate on the following one by a sham fight upon the Bosphorus, in which the whole of the naval force of the city was to be engaged. The waste of ammunition which this would occasion, was another proof to Elphenor of the fearful state of security in which it appeared Constantine had been plunged; and with a heart oppressed with grief and dire forebodings of the future, Elphenor once more entered Constantinople, which presented, as his informant had too truly stated, a scene of rejoicing

and excess, little fitted to nerve the hearts of the inhabitants against approaching danger.

It was late in the evening when the Ambassador crossed the Hippodrome; yet enough remained to show the extravagance and profusion which had reigned there during the celebration of the games. The three brazen serpents still dripped with the wine which had copiously flowed from their open mouths; and many a group passed, whose flower-crowned heads and noisy mirth proved them to have indulged freely in its use. Elphenor looked sadly upon them, as with joyous songs they escorted some victor in the games with due honour to his home. The lively Greek, and more sedate Roman, seemed equally imbued with a spirit of hilarity, which nothing could check; and the loud laugh and careless jest resounded on all sides, too soon, alas! to be exchanged for the voice of mourning and lamentation.

Sick at heart, Elphenor hurried on until he reached the Imperial palace, and having entered it, instantly sent to demand an audience of the Emperor. The answer he received was an invitation

to attend the banquet which was prepared, and he saw that any attempt at interference with the festivities of the hour would be utterly useless. Nor was he more successful, when, having explained the weighty reasons by which he was actuated, he implored the Emperor to countermand the intended spectacle for the next day.

Constantine, relieved by the insincere assurances of Mahomet, from fear of immediate danger, abandoned himself to a thoughtless gaiety; and though his manner and expressions were of the most affectionate nature towards Elphenor, yet with the tenacity of a child he refused to give up his plans for the amusement of the following day, and treated lightly the important disclosures which were made to him by his Ambassador. All his former levity of character seemed to have returned to him with double force during the absence of Elphenor; while the implicit faith which he placed in the protestations of the Sultan, was torture to the mind of one who knew the false spirit in which they had been made. But all remonstrance at that moment was vain, and excusing himself, on the plea

of his recent illness, Elphenor declined accompanying the Emperor to the mimic war, resolving to devote the hours of the absence of the Court, to a visit to his wife and child, for whose presence his heart had so long languished.

## CHAPTER XIX.

Gorgeous was the scene which the morning presented. All that Constantinople could boast of in wealth, beauty, or station, had assembled to do honour to the imperial invitation. The gilt and splendidly ornamented galley, which contained the Emperor and his immediate attendants, was the first that glided from the port, followed by numerous others, vying with each other in the magnificence of their decorations.

Seated beneath an awning of pale green silk, the curtains of which were looped up with a fringe of gold, the handsome countenance of the young Emperor beamed with delight, as he beheld the universal joy that reigned around, and heard the glad shout of the multitudes who lined the shore, and who, frantic with pleasure at witnessing so gaudy a spectacle, rent the air with acclamations, and blessings upon their Prince.

The brilliant fleet moved slowly on towards the channel of the Bosphorus, where those vessels which were to enact the chief part in the day's amusement, had already anchored to await the arrival of the Emperor. The ships that were to attack, had preserved their usual appearance and colours; while those on the opposite side had been made to resemble as closely as possible the vessels of the Mussulmen, so as to render the proceedings intelligible to the uninitiated part of the spectators. Soon the animated shouts of the seamen and the boom of the guns announced that the mimic war had begun; and as Elphenor rode slowly along the banks of the strait, he could see, as the soft breezes wafted the smoke above, the sparkling of the gilded oars, and hear the bursts of music that swelled upon the air, as the infatuated Prince of a giddy and pleasure-loving people swept across the waves in search of new delight; like the summer fly, disporting itself in the noontide gleam, heedless of the cloud that is gathering above.

With a sigh, Elphenor turned from the view, fixing his eyes fondly on the spot which contained

the one being to whom he had never looked in vain for consolation in the hour of anguish or of sorrow. Already he beheld the tops of the tall trees which crowned the hill above his dwelling; and hastening his pace as much as the weakness of his state would permit, he was soon in view of the bay which bounded the gardens of the villa. What was his surprise, when, instead of the calm tranquillity which generally reigned in that lovely spot, he perceived several persons hurrying to and fro upon the shore, and at a short distance were three large ships, which seemed to be riding at anchor in the bay; whilst from the mast-head the banner of the Infidels waved in the air.

At first, he imagined that they were some of the vessels which had been thus transformed, in order to play their part in the pageant of the day; but he was soon undeceived by remarking that they differed materially in form from those used by the Romans. While musing upon their extraordinary appearance, Elphenor arrived at the entrance to the villa, andhad not proceeded far, ere he perceived, to his amazement, that the way was impeded, so that it was impossible to advance. Two

lofty cedars, the growth of ages, lay prostrate upon the road, their giant arms stretching in every direction. With some difficulty Elphenor contrived to make a circuit through the wood which surrounded him; but, upon emerging from beneath its shelter, a sight, rousing him to madness, burst upon him. On every side, the noblest of the trees, which in his solitude he had loved to contemplate, were felled to the earth. The pine and the oak, the cedar and the cypress, all lay prostrate together upon the soft sward, which here and there showed a portion of its enamelled breast, gleaming through the yet unwithered boughs which pressed it.

Hastening forward, the scene of devastation every instant grew more fearful to the eye of Elphenor. Statues thrown from their pedestals, and marbles torn from the terraces, were trampled in confusion among the beds of bright flowers, which the pressure of many feet seemed to have almost trodden into the earth; while at every unbroken patch of verdure, several of the small rugged Turkish horses, with the high peaked saddles common to their country, were tethered to the beautiful magnolias and arbutus trees, which had escaped the general destruction.

The fears of Elphenor grew too great for endurance. Quitting the more circuitous path, he spurred his horse up the steep bank which led to the house; and throwing himself to the ground as he reached the portico, he would have entered, but the moment that he appeared, a score of turbaned heads protruded from the entrance, and the flashing of scimitars warned him not to approach.

"What means this?—who are ye?" exclaimed he, speaking, in his agitation, in his own language. A deep silence followed; and each Moslem figure which now filled the open space, might have been deemed one of stone, but for the fierce flashing of their dark eyes from beneath their sullen brows.

Again Elphenor attempted to advance, and again the bright steel gleamed before his eyes.

"For the love of heaven!" he cried, now speaking in the Turkish tongue, "tell me where is my wife?—where is my child? If you are good Mussulmen, you would not wrong a helpless woman, nor take a child from its father. This is no time of war—we are friends—it was but yesterday I arrived from Adrianople, from the city of your Sultan, the great Mahomet. If you do me wron g he will avenge it. This house is mine—speak—

where is my wife?—my child?—where are my servants?—speak, I command you."

Somewhat awed by the imperious gestures of Elphenor, and the mention of the Sultan, the soldiers looked at each other; yet no answer was returned.

"Where is my wife?" again exclaimed Elphenor, in a tone of agony.

Still no answering voice met his ear; but he fancied that he perceived the looks of the soldiers directed more particularly towards one of their number, and that a shade of apprehension passed over the countenance of the man. Without appearing to have observed it, Elphenor, with astonishing calmness, drew forth a well filled purse, and turning, as if to depart, observed, "It is the duty of a soldier to obey—doubtless, you have been commanded to be silent. I will seek your chief, and ask for justice at his hands. Let him but restore my wife and child, he shall have gold as much as he can desire."

So saying, he left the spot, but not without having seen the same glance rapidly directed towards the soldier he had at first remarked, and

who seemed of a grade superior to his comrades. Distracted with apprehension, Elphenor hurried on he knew not whither, when, as he turned the brow of the hill, his fears assumed a still darker shade. The promontory on which he stood was literally covered by Mussulmen, not only soldiers, but artisans of every class appeared to have collected on the spot. The air resounded with blows of the axe, and already a considerable angle of the beautiful wood was levelled with the ground; while others of the workmen were busily employed in tearing up the terraces, and hewing the most beautiful marbles into small pieces, some of which were already half consumed in the fires which had been kindled for the purpose of reducing them to lime.

The truth at once struck upon the mind of Elphenor, and though, with a heart bursting with distress, his presence of mind did not forsake him. He knew too well the hatred towards a Christian, which is innate in every Moslem bosom, to venture an appeal to their kindness; and assuming an air of carelessness, he approached a youth who was endeavouring to fasten two unruly horses to a tree,

and offering to assist him, he said, "You will want better forage for these than can be found here—they seem starving."

"They have had little enough since they left Gallipoli," returned the boy, sulkily; "but they have had better fare than I have."

"That is unjust," said Elphenor, as he put a piece of gold into the hand of the youth. "But for what purpose are all these men here?"

"They are going to build a castle for the Sultan. They only came last night, and see all they have cut down already!"

"Who is your chief?" asked Elphenor, who felt as if his senses were deserting him.

"Zeïd, the silversmith," as if every one did not know Zeïd in Gallipoli. "He was a silversmith before he turned soldier. No chance of any gold from him; he knows the value of it too well," said the boy, in a voice like the growl of a young mastiff.

"And where is Zeïd?" inquired Elphenor, struggling to repress his anxiety.

"Gone to see the show the Christians are making down there on the water," replied the boy, pointing

towards the straits; "but he is coming back now I see, and those lazy fellows asleep there will feel the bastinado, I dare say, if he catches them ——" and with a scowl of delight at the probable fate of his companions, the young Mussulman set himself to work to collect the scattered fragments of wood and pile them up in heaps.

Elphenor did not see what had suddenly caused the boy to quit the spot where he had been standing. The eyes of the wretched husband were fixed upon the vessel which, he felt, contained the only person who would or could relieve his mind from the dreadful surmises with which it was oppressed. Hastening to the shore, he received the Mussulman chief as he landed, with as much show of respect as it was possible to counterfeit, at a moment when the devastation of his property was, in the eyes of Elphenor, the least of the evils he endured. But the Turks are a grave and ceremonious people, and any attempt at an assumption of authority he well knew would only have excited his scorn, and a gleam of satisfaction from the consciousness of having it in his power to have injured a Christian.

Zeïd, the silversmith, as he was still called, from

the praiseworthy habit of the Turks, who not only do not try to conceal but openly proclaim the profession they have followed, was a tall thin man with a sharp face, and the eye of an eagle. He received the salutation of Elphenor graciously, placing his hand upon his breast, and, upon learning his name and situation, immediately produced a firman from the Sultan, authorising him to take possession of the spot which he then occupied, in virtue of the treaty which had been signed by the Ambassador of the Emperor at Adrianople. His instructions further *commanded* that no bodily harm should be done to the inhabitants, unless they resisted, nor any money extorted from them.

This specious show of generosity served to mark out the treachery of Mahomet, in the advantage he had taken of the very unwise permission of Constantine to select a spot upon his territory whereon to build a kiosk, or summer house, where he might enjoy the beauty of the scenery.

Elphenor did not now pause to debate the justice of the case, but with franctic entreaties besought the Ottoman chief to restore his wife and child, offering at the same time any price he should name

as their ransom. The eyes of Zeïd glistened as Elpenor spoke of gold, but fortunately they rested for a moment on the written document he held in his hand, and to disobey it openly, he well knew would cost him his head. Not having time to devise any scheme whereby he might secure the tempting bribe of the Greek, Zeïd took the simple method of telling the truth, which was, that Ida with her child and servants were safe within the walls of the villa, and that on pain of severe punishment he had forbidden his soldiers to molest or hold communication with any of the Greeks until his return.

As Elphenor listened to these words, his joy and gratitude were so vividly pourtrayed, that Zeïd, who had little veneration for women, imagined the Christian was mad; and as insane people are regarded by them with peculiar reverence, the malady being considered, by the Turks, a mark of the special favour of God, Zeïd immediately redoubled his respect towards one whom he could not think in his senses, when he beheld his manly form and stern features trembling with emotion as he spoke of his wife, and tears fall fast from his

eyes on hearing of her safety. Zeïd could have met or have parted with any, or all, of his four wives, without exhibiting the slightest emotion.

Acceding to the entreaty of Elphenor, the Ottoman chief, not unmoved by curiosity, accompanied the Greek towards the house, assuring him, all the time, that he need not fear for his wife or servants, for that his soldiers were completely under his control.

" Though I was a silversmith," he exclaimed, as he strutted along the terrace in his flowing robes, " every one is aware of the talents of Zeïd for war. His Highness the Sultan well knows I am to be trusted, and that none dare disobey my commands. Some day you will see Zeïd a Pacha, with three tails planted before his tent, and nine led horses in front when he marches to battle." So saying, and swelling with importance as his mind revelled in visions of the honours of the Pacha, which are the secret hope of all Mussulmen soldiers, Zeïd entered the house, his soldiers all drawing back, bending their heads, and laying their hands on their breasts. What was his dismay, and the agony of Elphenor, when, having traversed all the

apartments, neither Ida, nor the child, nor even one of the servants could be discovered. Furious at the exposure of such a breach of his boasted discipline, especially to Elphenor, Zeïd rushed to the portico, and seizing the first soldier that he met, dealt him such a blow on the head that the man roared with pain.

"Where are the Christian women?" shouted Zeïd, as he shook the unfortunate soldier by the throat. "How is it that my orders are disobeyed? Did I not command that the house should be guarded, and no one allowed to enter or pass out before my return?"

"It was not my fault," stammered the man.

"Peace, slave! where are the women?" cried Zeïd, rendered more angry by the consciousness of his own error, in having left his post.

"Produce them, or I will have your nose and ears cut off for disobedience."

"Pity—spare me!" cried the man, sinking on his knees, "I did not take the gold."

"Gold—what gold?" asked Zeïd, still more frantic at the idea that some one had fared better than himself.

All eyes were now turned to the man whom Elphenor had before observed as conspicuous among the soldiers, and who, perceiving that he had no chance of escape, fell on his knees before his chief, and confessed, that for a sum of gold which he now laid before Zeïd, he had permitted the departure of the Christian women.

" Slave! dog! beast! how did you dare to disobey my orders? Take that—and that—" as he struck him with all his might with the handle of his sword across the face; " and here," calling to some soldiers who were retiring gradually towards the outside of the portico, " Tie up this dog of a slave, and give him the bastinado, till the soles of his feet are laid bare."

Shocked at this cruel order, Elphenor attempted to interfere, and so far succeeded in pacifying the wrath of Zeïd, that he promised, on condition of his future good conduct, and the sacrifice of all the money he had received, to forgive the offence of the soldier.

Satisfied with this assurance, Elphenor hastily took his leave; but before he had reached the top of the hill, his heart sickened at the shrieks which

met his ear, showing the value a Mussulman smarting with wounded vanity attaches to a promise. Elphenor would willingly have returned to try and rescue a fellow-creature from torment, especially as his heart bled for the sufferings of one, by whose disobedience he himself had so deeply benefited; but his knowledge of the duplicity of the nation forbade him to hope that Zeïd the silversmith might offer an exception, and he, therefore, was compelled to abandon the unhappy wretch to his fate. Elphenor had not proceeded far, when he was met by some of his own servants, who informed him that his wife had taken refuge at the house of a neighbour. Thither, he immediately proceeded, and was soon clasped in the arms of Ida, who, with Melanthe, had been kindly received by her friend; but Elphenor knew too well the dangers to which they might be exposed, by remaining at a distance from him, and before night he had removed these objects so precious to his heart, and they were safely lodged in the palace which the Emperor had bestowed upon him, within the walls of Constantinople.

## CHAPTER XX.

The indignation of Constantine was unbounded upon receiving the intelligence which, on his return to the city, was immediately announced to him. The treacherous advantage which had been taken of his generosity deeply wounded the sensitive and noble heart of the Emperor; and almost with tears in his eyes, he acknowledged to Elphenor the truth of the predictions he had hitherto refused to believe.

The example of his Grand Chamberlain was in itself sufficient to have excited a spirit of emulation in a mind less self-sacrificing than that of Constantine. The total destruction of his property, and the demolition of a dwelling rendered dear to him by so many associations, appeared less to affect the thoughts of Elphenor, than did the cruel baseness with which Mahomet had selected the spot, of which, during his visit to Adrianople,

Elphenor had been led, by the wily questions of the monarch, frequently to boast.

The unflinching integrity of the Greek Ambassador, while it excited the surprise, had also engendered a deadly hatred in the bosom of Mahomet, who secretly winced beneath the galling contrast an upright and honest policy presented to his own crooked and perfidious ways. The malice of his heart was gratified by the injury which it was in his power to inflict upon one who had scorned his bribes with undisguised contempt, and he had instantly devised the scheme which now called forth the surprise and indignation of Constantine and all his people.

But soon Elphenor was not the only sufferer. Every hour brought a fresh account of the devastation which the followers of Zeïd, the silversmith, were causing in the neighbourhood of the spot upon which they had landed; and before the next day a thousand masons, each with two attendants, disembarked from the Mussulmen ships which now crowded the straits.

To each of these masons was assigned the task of completing two cubits per day; and by the

immense quantities of materials which hourly arrived, it was plain, not only that the building was to be of large dimensions, but that it had been planned for a considerable time before-hand. Boats from Cataphrygia came loaded with lime; others from Heraclea and Nicomedia brought timber, ready seasoned; and large blocks of stone, which had been dug, and hewn into form in the quarries of Anatolia, were conveyed, with infinite toil, up the steep ascent of the shore. Europe and Asia seemed to have combined to produce, at a moment's warning, the necessary materials, as well as the artisans requisite to carry on the projected works.

The only answer which Zeïd would or could return to the inquiries of the Emperor, was a justification of himself, by pleading obedience to the Sultan, who had ordered him to erect, upon the European shore, a fortress similar to that by which the Asiatic side was defended. The policy of Mahomet was at once visible. By the erection of this castle he would secure to himself the Black Sea, and cut off from that side all communication with Constantinople. In a few hours, between four and five thousand persons had collected upon the promontory.

To have seized their ships, and put the people to the sword, would have been the work of a day to Constantine, and might have operated as an effectual check to the audacity of Mahomet. By gaining time, the Greek empire might yet have acquired strength; but Constantine, whose sense of honour, under the circumstances, was, perhaps, scarcely justifiable, forbade the sacrifice of so many lives in a time of nominal peace, and resolved once more to try the effect of remonstrance.

A message to the Sultan was resolved upon, but no longer one of conciliation or friendship. The spirit of Constantine was roused, and with his own hand he wrote a letter to Mahomet, complaining of the violation of good faith which the erection of a castle upon the Greek territory embodied, and demanding the withdrawal of the troops and workmen occupying the ground.

The bearer of this letter was Demetrius of Ypsara, who had volunteered to fulfil a mission which, in the present disposition of the Sultan, could not be otherwise than an undertaking of extreme danger. Perhaps some latent hope of once again seeing Chezmé might have mingled

with the spirit of enthusiasm with which the breast of Demetrius glowed towards his sovereign.

In this hope, however, he was disappointed; and even when he stood before her father, the Grand Vizier, he did not venture to pronounce the name that trembled upon his lips.

The answer of the Sultan was such as realized the worst fears of Demetrius. Having carefully read the letter, he turned upon the young Greek a countenance beaming with anger.

"Tell your master," he said, "that he will soon learn that Asia is inhabited by the Turks, and Europe is deserted by the Romans. The empire of Constantinople is bounded by her walls —the ground I have taken is my own, and mine it shall remain. The castle I have ordered to be built is the fulfilment of a vow, made by my father; and it shall be fulfilled. That castle shall rear its head aloft long after the stones of the Greek city, like the power of its Emperor, have crumbled into dust before the arms of Mahomet. You have head my words—they shall be accomplished."

"Hear, then, the answer which His Majesty the Emperor of the Greeks has commanded me to

deliver," said Demetrius, boldly. "Since neither faith, nor submission, nor friendship have weight with one who regards them not, let him pursue his impious course. My trust is in God! To the last drop of my blood I will defend my city and my people! Let Him who is judge of all decide between us."

"'Tis well," exclaimed Mahomet, rising in anger, though really not ill pleased at these hostile words. "Return to your Emperor, and tell him the fate that he covets, soon shall be his.—Ere he can look around him, I will be at his gates. He knows not the Sultan of the Ottomans, if he thinks he resembles his predecessors. Tell him that I will do in a day more than they would have thought of in years. Return this once in safety; but should another messenger arrive, to attempt to appease my fury, he shall be flayed alive."

With these words Mahomet broke up the audience; and Demetrius once more departed from Adrianople, without having been able to learn anything of the fate of Chezmé. He had endeavoured to make some inquiries, but was every where met by the stupid indifference which the

Turks commonly manifest upon any subject not immediately concerning themselves. Full of sorrow for the probable danger to which her abandonment of her home must have exposed her, Demetrius returned, sad and weary, to Constantinople.

## CHAPTER XXI.

The mask was now thrown aside, and the answer of the Sultan left no doubt as to the course which Constantine ought to pursue. Messengers were immediately dispatched to all the allied powers, craving their immediate assistance. The Pope, alarmed at the turn the affairs of the empire had taken, condescended to accede to the oft-repeated prayer of Constantine; and the Cardinal Isidore of Russia, with a superb retinue of priests and soldiers, soon afterwards arrived in Constantinople.

The very means which had been devised to secure the protection of the Holy See, militated against the general good of the empire. The arrival of the Cardinal was the signal for the revival of religious prejudices; but the Emperor, true to his promise, and supported by the opinion of Elphenor and the ablest of his councillors, immediately announced his intention of carrying into effect the union of the

churches. That every one might understand the minute points of difference between the forms of worship, sermons were publicly preached in various parts of the city, and priests went about expounding to the people the necessary information. Many conformed at once to the rites of the Azymites, as the Roman priests were called; but the great mass of the citizens listened in sullen silence, unable to confute the arguments they heard, though inwardly chafing against this innovation upon their religion.

As time pressed, however, at last the decree of the Emperor went forth; the 12th of December, 1452, was fixed for the signing of the Act of Union, as it had been ratified in the Council of Florence; and in the church of St. Sophia, the two nations were summoned to join in the communion of sacrifice and prayer.

On the morning of the appointed day, the city presented one mass of human beings; some hurrying to the church, with hearts full of zeal and devotion; others, stimulated by curiosity, though the greatest portion of the Greeks who attended, were actuated by a dislike of acknowledging the superiority of the Latin church, rather than by a feeling of

repugnance to its form of worship. The spirit of discontent was at its height. The Greeks, as they entered the church, kept close together; and, as the service proceeded, they studiously avoided acceding to what had been commanded, namely, that all should openly join in prayer. The ostensible excuse was, their ignorance of the language in which the service was conducted, while in reality they burned with envy on beholding the splendours of the high mass, which was celebrated by the Cardinal himself, attended by his retinue, dressed in their richest habits. The names of Nicholas V., and Gregory, the exiled Patriarch of the Greeks, resounded together in a solemn chaunt from the altar; but even this failed to arouse any warmth of feeling in the congregation, and, murmuring and quarrelling, even the conforming Greeks departed from the church.

"Holy Virgin!" exclaimed one, who appeared peculiarly out of humour, "there will be no living in the city for us now."

"These Romans were proud enough before," said another, who was a tailor; "but I warrant me, now they have got their grand Legate, with all

his bedizened followers, they will hold their heads a little higher. I dare say not one of them will condescend to wear one of my mantles now; all their embroidery must come from Rome, I suppose."

"Well, any day I can show them better brocade than their grand priests swept up the aisle in to-day," said a little man, who was a silk weaver. "Ah! they'll be obliged to come to us, after all."

"It is not exactly the gain I mean," replied the tailor. "Thank heaven, I am above that; but to think of the audacity of those accursed Azymites, daring to dispense with adding warm water to the wine for the Holy Sacrament."

"All that I would pass over, in charity to their ignorance," said another; but, Holy Mother of God! to think that our infant children are to be debarred from receiving the sacrament, is a heavy sin."

"What do the Azymites care if *our* children perish body and soul?" answered his neighbour. "There will be the more room for the proud Romans; but, at least, they need not call this new-fangled tyranny religion."

"It is scandalous," observed a demure-looking

personage, who had been listening for some time to the murmurs of the crowd, and was an itinerant preacher. "I have done my best to expose the fallacy of the Azymite creed. I have studied by night, and toiled by day; but, ye deluded men, ye would not hear me."

"Hear you!" exclaimed a young man, with a merry face, who stood by. "Why, we should have enough to do, if we listened to all you say. I'm for Saint Gennadius, who never talks for more than five minutes at a time."

"Gennadius! Gennadius!" immediately echoed several voices. "Let us go to the holy man; he will soon tell us what we are to do, and whether this grand Legate and his Romans are to trample us and our religion under foot."

"Yes; to Gennadius, let us go," shouted the multitude; and in a body they rushed to the cell of the monk; but he, foreseeing, probably, what would happen, had taken the wise precaution of securing his door inside. As none presumed to intrude upon the privacy of the anchorite, the foremost of the crowd, which was chiefly composed of artisans, stood aghast at the discovery.

" Here is a tablet," cried the preacher, seizing with avidity a written piece of parchment, which hung outside.

" Read it then," exclaimed the young man who appeared to hold the oratorical powers of the preacher in great contempt ; " at all events, it will be better than one of your sermons."

So saying, he took off his cap with an air of respect, and his example being followed by the whole multitude, the preacher roared out, with stentorian lungs—" Oh miserable and degraded Greeks! why will ye abandon the religion of your fathers, and trust in the Italians? The sword of the Infidel is above your heads! Faith alone will save you. Pause, and repent. For me, may the Lord have mercy on me! I am innocent of the crime."

A deep silence followed the reading of these words, which at last broke into a low murmur, and then swelling gradually, as the people gained courage from the looks and whispers of their neighbours, it burst in one wild shout of triumph and defiance.

" We were right; we were right, after all. Away with the Azymites, holy Gennadius for us!" exclaimed a loud voice from among the crowd, while

the rest took up the cry, and the name of "Gennadius" rent the air.

"How say you, my friends?" asked a fat little man, a wine-seller, as soon as silence was in some degree restored. "Shall we drink a cup in honour of the Holy Virgin, and confusion to the Azymites?"

"Yes, yes!" shouted the multitude. "Away with the cardinal. Away with the Azymites—we want no new religion here;" and, singing and shouting, they threw up their caps in the air, and turned to celebrate their triumph, towards the quarter of the city where the wine-seller lived.

This was the commencement of the schism, which spread like an epidemic through the town. The fumes of intoxication aided the frenzy of the zealots; and the Greek priests, through the medium of the confessional, continued to fan the flame. All who had received the communion, or even listened to the prayers of a Romish priest, were condemned to a rigorous penance. The church of St. Sophia was denounced as polluted, and avoided by the benighted fanatics with as much religious horror, as a Jewish synagogue, or Heathen temple, and the name of Azymite became the foulest of stigmas.

This religious mania was fatal to the cause of

the Greeks. Dastardly by nature, their meanness found an excuse in their devotion, to dispense with their duty to their country; and to separate themselves from an Emperor who had dared to execute so impious a plan, appeared to their excited minds a praiseworthy determination. Preachers went about inflaming the zeal of the lukewarm, by promising a supernatural deliverance, and exciting a blind spirit of resignation, till scarcely a Greek of the middle or lower classes remained untinged by the contagion.

In such a state of things was the first appeal made by the Emperor to his people. All those capable of bearing arms were invited to assemble in the open space of the Hippodrome, and to enrol their names in defence of their country. A day was appointed for the ceremony; and Constantine, in whom the treachery of the Sultan had aroused the spirit of a hero, rode forth, surrounded by a brilliant train of officers and courtiers, and addressed the multitude.

"Citizens and friends," said he; "you have heard how the Infidel Turk has dared to insult you. He has sworn to level your city with the

dust, and to sell your children for slaves. Will ye bend your necks to the yoke? Shall the tread of the Moslem pollute the hearth of the Christian? Citizens! your sovereign calls upon you to arise; not only for his honour, but for your liberty and your lives! Arise! and be firm; be faithful, and Mahomet shall rue the day when he dared to boast that the Crescent should gleam where the Roman Eagle had died."

These words were received with a burst of acclamation. The volatile multitude, always easily excited by any display of spirit, and delighted with the show and splendour by which their Emperor was distinguished, forgot for the time their religious differences; and, as he rode round the vast arena, graciously acknowledging the cheers and blessings which, especially by the women, were lavished upon him, he indulged in the delusion that he possessed the affections of a devoted and enthusiastic people. It generally happens that those whose demonstrations of attachment are the most noisy, are also the most backward in offering their service in any time of danger; and ere long the buoyant spirit of the young Emperor was

chilled by the discovery that the number of those who volunteered in his defence was comparatively trifling.

Elphenor, whose observing eye had noted the symptoms of disaffection, even in the midst of the shouting crowd, had wisely suppressed the publication of a fact that would have at once carried despair to the hearts of the faithful adherents of the Emperor.

The Greeks almost unanimously refrained from entering their names upon the lists. The population of the city was estimated at above a hundred thousand inhabtitants; and yet, to the consternation of the Emperor, he was secretly informed by Elphenor that four thousand nine hundred and seventy Romans were the only really efficient soldiers within the walls. The report was scarcely credible, but the fact was indisputable; and tears of shame and mortification burst from the eyes of the young monarch at this proof of the spiritless and cowardly nature of the subjects whom he had loved and trusted. Deserted at home, it became more than ever necessary to secure the intervention of foreign aid; and princely offers and promises

were made to the bands of mercenary troops by which Europe was then overrun, and who were always ready to sell their services to the highest bidder. Yet this accession would be comparatively trifling, considering the overwhelming numbers of the enemy; and the situation of the city of Constantinople became every hour more precarious.

All that could be devised by the activity and energy of Elphenor and a trusty band of adherents, was willingly executed by Constantine, who devoted himself, day and night, to the duties which devolved upon him, of the importance of which he seemed aware, alas! only when it was too late! He caused the fortifications of the city to be repaired and strengthened; and every ship which arrived for the purposes of trade, was detained to augment his means of defence. The naval force of the Mussulmen was inferior to that of the Christians, though in numbers far surpassing it; and Constantine felt hope revive in his bosom as he beheld the beautiful waters of the Golden Horn, crowded with his ships, and defended by a strong chain, which, drawn across the mouth of the harbour, seemed to bid defiance to any attempt of the enemy.

## CHAPTER XXII.

A FEW weeks had elapsed, and the alarm which the preparations of the Emperor had excited began to subside, when the startling intelligence was received that the Sultan had quitted Adrianople, and was advancing, at the head of his army, towards the city. The vanguard had already taken possession of several small towns and villages on the Black Sea, belonging to the Greeks; and the fall of Selybria, which alone had dared to resist the summons of the Moslem, and was in consequence speedily reduced to ashes, spread terror and desolation around. The panic was increased by the unbridled licence with which the news of the advance of the Sultan inspired the followers of Zeïd, the silversmith, who hitherto had restrained them within bounds.

The fortress was now completed; and of the beautiful villa of Elphenor not a vestige remained,

except a few of the largest trees, which, being sufficiently removed from the shore not to offer any impediment to the progress of their work, the Mussulmen, yielding to their national reverence for such objects, had contrived to rescue from the general wreck. Of the buildings, terraces, and statues, not a trace was left; and some marble being required to complete the interior of the castle, the Turks without scruple had seized upon the neighbouring churches and convents, and torn down the pillars of porphyry, consecrated to St. Michael the archangel, which were held in peculiar veneration by the Greeks.

This roused the anger of the latter, who, falling upon the Mussulmen, endeavoured to wrest from them the prize they had seized: but the attempt was vain; the Christians were defeated; and those who escaped the slaughter took refuge within the walls of Constantinople, carrying with them the most exaggerated account of their defeat. The city was in an uproar, and some of the most discontented publicly accused their Emperor of tamely submitting to see his subjects butchered by the Turks.

Constantine, who knew that his only chance of safety lay in the perfect unity of spirit of those who surrounded him, instantly came to a determination, which he hoped would be the means of separating the disaffected from those who remained true to him. He issued an ordinance that for three days the gates of the city should remain open, and that all who chose to depart were at liberty to do so. From a neighbouring tower Elphenor anxiously watched the effect of this proclamation, and beheld with grief and indignation a base crowd, amongst whom were many of the principal Greeks, bending their coward steps beyond the reach of danger. Sadly he gazed upon these degenerate sons of a noble race; and turning to Ida, who was standing by his side, exclaimed, as he beheld the scorn which flashed from her eye as she marked the caitiff crowd hurrying from the gate, "Unhappy country!"

"Unhappy indeed," replied Ida, "when a woman's cheek must blush to call it her's. A land of cowards and of slaves! See, see how they rush forward, as though the Moslem cannon were planted on our walls. Shame, shame upon them all!"

" And yet," said Elphenor sadly, " could I but persuade thee, thou, too, shouldst be amongst them. Consider, Ida, my beloved, this is no place for thee !"

" Yes, yes," interrupted Ida, " my place is by thy side. In danger as in joy, it is my place, and none shall tear from me the precious right. Nay, do not speak," she continued, seeing that Elphenor was about to remonstrate, " I know there is danger —but to part were death."

" There may be a danger still worse than death," said Elphenor, hesitatingly, as he strained the clasping form of Ida to his breast.

" None," replied Ida, in a low voice, as she half withdrew from its sheath a poniard she carried in her vest ; " none, for her who never forgets she bears the holy name of wife."

" My blessed Ida," exclaimed Elphenor, in a voice of anguish, as his mind trembled before the allusion these words conveyed. " Be advised, there is yet time ; consider our child—our Melanthe."

" I have considered all," said Ida, hastily ; " I will not leave you."

" Then be it so," answered Elphenor, solemnly ;

" and thou, O Holy God! watch over and protect her!"

With these words, he laid his hand on the bowed head of his beautiful wife, and both seemed for a time to breathe a secret prayer; but neither prayed for themselves.

On the fourth day, the gates of the city were closed. Every hour now brought fresh causes of alarm; but soon all doubt was dispelled. The Sultan was scarcely five miles distant from the city. The rapidity of his approach was appalling. Consternation filled all hearts, and sentinels were appointed at both sides of the town to give notice of the first appearance of the foe, or the still expected succours which had been promised by the allies. Long did the anxious watchers strain their eyes over the blue waters of the Bosphorus—no friendly vessels greeted their longing gaze; while on the side of the land, symptoms of an approaching army were but too visible; and ere the hour of noon had passed, on the 6th day of the month of April, the crescent of the Infidels glittered on the hills, and Mahomet encamped before the walls of Constantinople.

The land side on the base of the triangle, which the city forms, was the quarter chosen for the attack; the other two sides being defended, the one by the Golden Horn, and the other by the steep shore of the Propontis, not affording to the Moslem any chance of success.

The city was fortified towards the land by a treble wall of enormous thickness, extending to the length of six miles, and separated from the enemy by a deep ditch a hundred feet in breadth. The wall was defended by numerous towers, built at irregular distances. Towers also flanked the gates, before the principal of which, St. Romanus, Mahomet had planted the standard of the Prophet.

The first attack produced little effect, and after a few days, the Sultan, impatient at the slowness of his progress, resolved to change his plan of operations. He directed the chief part of his force to be concentrated before the gate of St. Romanus, and gave orders that the towers by which it was guarded, should be battered to the ground. The monstrous cannon, which had been dragged with infinite toil from Adrianople, was planted opposite, flanked by two others of scarcely smaller dimen-

sions; while fourteen batteries opened at once upon every point which appeared accessible. The whole force of the Turkish artillery thundered upon the walls, and the union of the ancient with the modern system of attack, added still more to the horrors of the scene! Streams of the liquid and unquenchable fire, then so much in use, mingled with stones and darts, rained upon the city; while from the walls the brave Constantine, with a devoted band of followers, poured down upon his assailants a shower of lances and arrows, accompanied by an incessant discharge of small arms; their musketry being so contrived as to fire ten bullets at a time, carried no small havoc into the foremost ranks of the Ottomans.

Unmindful of the danger, Constantine, whose heroic courage seemed to gather strength every moment, undertook the defence of the outward wall; and when the din of battle no longer allowed his voice to be heard, by his gestures he encouraged his soldiers, who seconded him with undaunted spirit. A furious sally was made by the besieged, and so unexpected was the movement, that in an instant hundreds of the assailants lay dead within

the ditch; and the Christians, under cover of a well directed fire from the walls, retreated without much loss, carrying off a great number of prisoners.

This first success raised the hopes and courage of those within the city, more than it had damped the ardour of the besiegers; but Mahomet did not view this slight repulse with as much calmness as his generals, and the superior discipline of the Christians stung him to the quick. He immediately ordered the formation of trenches, and endeavoured to institute a more systematic plan of attack than had at first been pursued, thus endeavouring to remedy the terrible confusion and insubordination of his Ottoman troops.

But the training of an army is not the work of a day, and on every side the genius of the Sultan was thwarted by the ignorance, and want of discipline of his followers. Though abundantly supplied with ammunition, it soon became apparent that the Turkish artillery produced little effect. In a paroxysm of fury, Mahomet ordered the engineers to be stoned through the camp, and others to be brought to supply their places; this, however, was not productive of better success.

The art was yet in its infancy, and the talent of the Sultan could not supply the place of practical knowledge. At length, in despair, he proclaimed that a reward of a hundred ducats should be given to him who would undertake to direct the fire effectually. Many presented themselves, and to the shame of Christianity, Andebert of Saxony, a Christian warrior, who had taken service with the Moslems, was the successful candidate, who scrupled not to use his experience against his brethren.

He immediately assumed the command of the engineers; and Mahomet, whose mind was far above the prejudices of his nation, beheld with joy the crest-fallen air of his officers, as they sullenly witnessed the superior science of a stranger. Under his able guidance, every shot now told upon the angle of the tower; and soon the crumbling of the outer wall gave token that the ancient structure began to yield. Elated by his success, Mahomet resolved upon a still nearer approach; and ordering an immense number of waggons, hogsheads, trunks of trees, and every thing that could be collected, to be placed at the edge of the ditch, at a given signal the whole of the mass

was forced into it, by the united strength of thousands; and such was the barbarity with which the workmen were urged to an effort almost beyond the strength of man, that many were thrown head foremost beneath the rolling weight, and crushed to atoms. The power of numbers triumphed, and before nightfall, a firm footing was obtained where before a yawning abyss alone had been visible.

Satisfied with their day's work, the Ottomans retired to their camp — the firing from the city had ceased, and each party seemed to await the return of day to renew the combat; but Constantine, ever watchful, had not quitted his post upon the walls, and taking advantage of the darkness and storm which had arisen, in the dead of the night he collected all his forces, and sallying forth from each of the gates, before sunrise he had contrived to draw the greater part of the rubbish with which the ditch had been piled, within the walls.

The next morning the whole Ottoman army was stupified with surprise; but Mahomet, whose fury against the Christians rekindled at every repulse,

swore with a fearful oath that the chasm should be refilled before night, or that he would march across the ditch over the bodies of his men.

A despot seldom threatens in vain. By unparalleled efforts, his orders were obeyed, but only to be again counteracted by the resources of the active Emperor; and at length, worn out by the little progress he seemed to make, Mahomet suddenly abandoned his mode of attack, and keeping up a sufficient fire to engage the attention of the besieged, he employed an immense body of troops to undermine the city.

Concealed by the whole force of the Janissaries, who occupied the post nearest the ditch, the miners advanced steadily until within a short distance of the walls, when they found a stratum of rock of such hardness, that it was almost impossible to cut through it. This was an obstacle which their want of skill did not enable them to overcome; and, in fear and trembling, the Vizier repaired to the pavilion of the Sultan, to inform him of the ill success of their endeavours.

Calil Pacha found the tent empty, and Mahomet so deeply engaged in a scheme, that for some time

had engaged his attention, that for the moment the alarm of the Vizier subsided. In the midst of an open space in the camp, the Sultan, on horseback, was himself directing the construction of a machine, such as never before had been used by the Turks. An enormous tower of wood, with a flat top, stood upon rollers of a gigantic size. The outside was covered with a thick coating of hides, in order to protect it from fire. Inside there was a staircase, and various loopholes; the stairs conducted to a platform upon the top, where a machine, worked from within, raised a broad ladder to the same level; thus forming a sort of bridge, which could be thrown across in the course of a few minutes, whenever a favourable opportunity offered to approach the walls of the city. This tower was the invention of Mahomet himself, and nothing could exceed the consternation with which it filled the Greeks as they beheld it gradually lowered by a thousand pullies from the opposite side of the ditch.

With a solemn awe they gazed upon the almost supernatural structure, which advanced inch by inch, creaking and tottering, until it rested exactly opposite the gate of St. Romanus. The walls were

crowded with spectators, and Constantine, with his brilliant staff, occupied his usual post. The heart of the Emperor sickened, as he beheld this new device, which he well knew would increase in his people the apprehension which he had in vain striven to subdue. Suddenly he laid his hand upon the arm of Demetrius, who stood next to him, while, with a gesture, he imposed silence upon all around, and every eye followed the direction of the anxious glance of their sovereign.

From one of the upper loopholes, which had been left in the sides of the machine, in order to admit the light, a small white flag was hastily waved, and as hastily withdrawn. This was repeated several times, and then from above the coping of the platform, upon the top, a turbaned head was seen peering cautiously around, and a face, too well known in Constantinople for the honour of him in whose service it had visited the camp of the enemy, appeared. It was that of Hassan, the Janissary, who had been the confidential servant of Calil Pacha. One moment of steadfast gaze upon the walls, the next a bow was raised, and as the head of Hassan sunk behind the coping, an arrow dropped at the feet of the Emperor.

Demetrius sprung forward, and, picking it up, presented it to Constantine, who hastily untied and examined the letter which was bound around it; then summoning Elphenor to his side, a few moments of consultation took place, before the secret was imparted to Demetrius.

"This scroll," said Constantine, addressing him, "informs us, that within that tower is a friend who would serve us. To rescue him, upon the first attempt of the enemy to scale the walls, will be a service of danger, if not of death! Demetrius, this honourable post is your's;" and the Emperor gave the scroll into the hand of his faithful friend.

One instant the young Greek knelt before his sovereign; in another he had quitted the spot; and, with a trusty band of soldiers, he proceeded, in accordance with the directions contained in the paper, to take his station upon the outer wall, directly in front of the wooden tower. A single shot was heard—then another, and another—and the next moment a sharp firing from the turret announced that the combat had begun. The cheers of the Janissaries on the opposite side of the ditch,—the shouts of "Alláh! Alláh!" repeated by thousands of voices—the sharp

report of the matchlocks, and the sullen boom of the guns, as an incessant fire was kept up upon the walls, on either side of the tower, rendered it almost impossible to distinguish any lesser sound.

Demetrius, who with undaunted courage continued to maintain his perilous situation, now feared that something had occurred to mar the execution of the proposed plan, when once again the pullies of the tower began to creak, and the ladder was slowly raised towards the walls. The intense anxiety with which Demetrius watched the progress of the unwieldy machine as at one moment it reared its head, and the next seemed to totter under the weight of the stones which were hurled upon it from thecity, caused him to doubt the policy of having entrusted the secret to so few of the besieged. Soon, however, he was relieved from his worst fears. The ladder was firmly planted against the wall, and the first form that bounded across it, was that of Hassan. A score of Jannissaries, stimulated by the hope of the immense reward offered by Mahomet to those who should effect an entrance, rushed upon his steps, and, with deafening shouts of "Alláh! Alláh!" endeavoured to beat

back the first opponents they encountered, in order to afford a free passage to their own supporters.

The soldiers of Demetrius, acting from the orders they had received, allowed Hassan to separate himself from his companions, against whom their well-directed fury told so effectually, that they were completely repulsed; and the ladder having given way under the accumulated weight of those who pressed onwards to support them, they were precipitated into the ditch.

Meanwhile, the escape of Hassan had not been attended with the complete success a device so bold, might have warranted, and struck down by a bolt from a cross-bow, he had fallen within the walls. But his wound, though severe, was not dangerous, and he soon recovered sufficiently to be carried before the Emperor. During his interview, which lasted a considerable time, he disclosed to Constantine the plan which he had laid, and by which the tower, and all that it contained, could be reduced to ashes.

In the bottom of the machine was a magazine filled with powder; and Hassan having contrived, during the night, to secrete himself among the bags

which contained it, had opened the lower part of several, and by boring small holes through the boarding, had secured the means of effecting instant ignition.

" And what motive can you have in thus betraying your sovereign?" inquired Constantine, half doubtful of the sincerity of purpose with which this extraordinary disclosure was made.

" Revenge!" answered Hassan, while his black eyes rolled hideously, and every feature was distorted with rage.

" He has seized upon my daughter—my only child, and shut her up within the walls of his accursed harem. I dared to implore her release—offered gold—gold that would have purchased ten slaves more beautiful than she is; and the only answer I received, was a hundred strokes of the bastinado. Had they been upon my feet, I should have been a cripple for life; but a Janissary may not be beaten, save on the back; I had just been enrolled, so I escaped; but the wounds upon my body are yet unhealed. I bore all in silence, for I had vowed revenge. Open the gate before midnight—promise to protect me afterwards, and

I will lay the train. Five hundred picked men of the Sultan's own body guard, and several of his best officers, are within the tower—*where will they be to-morrow?*"

A shudder ran through the Christians at the savage grin which glared on the countenance of Hassan, as he uttered these words; but pity may not tarry in the breast of a warrior; and Constantine gave the required promise. The tear which had glistened in the eye of the Moslem father, as he spoke of his daughter, showed the depth of the grief which a Turk ever scorns to betray, and the Emperor no longer hesitated to trust him. The words of Hassan were true. That night, ere the midnight watch was set, the work of thousands was destroyed; and the shriek that rent the air, as a terrific explosion lighted up the heavens till the stars paled beneath its glare, told to Mahomet that in the ready treachery of an enslaved people, might ever be found one of the sure and bitter curses of a despot.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

The check which the Turkish arms received, had the effect of producing a temporary cessation of hostilities. The rage of the Sultan knew no bounds; and it was in fear and trembling that Calil Pacha ventured to lay before him the overtures of the besieged for peace. The confidence of Mahomet had considerably abated, yet his words were more haughty than before; and the three conditions which he proposed as the terms of an honourable surrender were so revolting to the feelings of the Christians, that the negociations only terminated by a mutual increase of hatred and animosity.

During the momentary repose afforded by the interchange of messages, the Emperor had had several interviews with Hassan, who was recovering from his wound. He had been received into the house of Elphenor, where he was watched and

tended by Ida with zealous care. The terror of the poor slave lest he should fall into the hands of Mahomet, was pitiable to behold ; yet, amidst all his fears, a feeling of gratitude and faith to his old master, Calil Pacha, constantly broke forth ; and in the most touching words he would bewail the unhappy situation of the Vizier, and his probable fate, should the Sultan become aware of any of his mal-practices. Gratitude in a Turkish bosom holds the place of all other virtues; and Hassan could not forget the master whom he had served. Every day some new device was proposed by him, whereby the Vizier might be warned ; but hostilities had recommenced, and all possibility of friendly communication with the besiegers was consequently prohibited.

At length, Demetrius, whose heart ever sunk at the mention of danger to the father of Chezmé, undertook, with the permission of the Emperor, to endeavour to carry into effect a plan which Hassan solemnly assured him, if successful, would be the means of saving the city. This was, to seek the Vizier, and, through his endeavour, to win over the good offices of Almanzor, the chief astrologer.

The gross superstition of Mahomet was no secret to his followers. In all his enterprises Almanzor accompanied him; and so implicit was the belief of the Sultan in his predictions, that no plan of operations was decided upon without a previous consultation with the astrologer, who, for the greater convenience of his Royal Master, occupied a pavilion immediately behind that of the Sultan. More than once had Hassan been the depositary of the secret means by which the Vizier had contrived, when it suited his purpose, to influence the predictions of Almanzor; and he informed the Emperor that it only needed a bribe more enormous than any he had ever received, to render the reading of the stars utterly unpropitious to the designs of the Sultan against the city.

So confident was Hassan of the success of his scheme, that the Emperor at length consented to the prayer of Demetrius, who nobly volunteered to undertake the hazardous experiment of penetrating the Turkish camp. No sooner, however, had every thing been arranged, than a new difficulty presented itself. The royal treasury had been emptied by the

preparations for war; and the city was reduced to such a degree of poverty, that Constantine had been reluctantly obliged to seize upon the holy vessels belonging to the churches, and coin them into money, in order to satisfy the avarice of the mercenary troops, who refused to fight till the arrears of their pay had been discharged. To the everlasting shame of the Greeks, many there were who secreted their wealth, replying to the entreaties of their sovereign by allegations of poverty; and when the attempt was about to be abandoned for want of means, it was a Jew who stepped forward to the relief of the Christian Emperor, who, in consideration of the valuable articles advanced, was actually forced to pledge the jewels of his imperial diadem.

At length, all was prepared. For some days the siege had been carried on without vigour, and the hour of sunset had been the signal for the cessation of hostilities. With a beating heart, but a spirit which rose as the hour of danger approached, the young Demetrius impatiently watched the decline of day; and no sooner had the brief twilight disappeared, than, fully equipped as a Janissary, he

prepared to leave the city. With infinite toil he contrived to cross the ditch, and succeeded in clambering up the rocky ledge on the opposite side, which formed as it were a natural counterscarp. Looking cautiously around, he hastily traversed the space in front of the Turkish outposts, and taking advantage of a slight irregularity of ground, threw himself at full length into the shadow of the mound, in order to take a better survey of the objects around.

The night was dark, though, at intervals, a struggling moonbeam shone for an instant through the heavy clouds that were hurrying across the sky. Demetrius could plainly discern the glimmering of the crescent, which marked the pavilion of the Sultan ; while a little in advance, the dark green folds of the standard of the Prophet flapped heavily as the night wind swept past. To escape the vigilance of the sentries, was a task of no great difficulty. Sheltered by his disguise, which had been taken from a prisoner, Demetrius, assuming the air and gait of a Turk, was allowed to pass on unmolested, until he reached the camp ; but, once arrived within the incredible mass of confusion a Turkish encampment presents to the eye, his

perplexity returned; and to reach the tent of the Vizier, without discovery, appeared a matter of impossibility. So profound was the silence which reigned around, that each step upon the sandy surface upon which he trod, was distinctly audible, and more than one turbaned Infidel of the numbers, who were lazily stretched on the ground before their tents, opened their eyes, and laid their hands on their scimitars, as the progress of Demetrius somewhat disturbed their repose. Still onwards he proceeded, taking advantage of each gleam of moonlight, in order, if possible, to ascertain the position of the tent of the Vizier, which was always at some little distance from that of the Sultan.

Demetrius appeared to have reached the middle of the camp, but on all sides rose pavilions of so much magnificence, that it was impossible for a stranger to distinguish between them. In the centre stood one tent much larger than the rest, and elevated upon a dais. This Demetrius knew to be the one in which the council met, and in front of which criminals were executed. Fifteen *Spahis* stood with drawn sabres at the entrance, to guard the imperial treasure, which, in little boxes, is always kept in this tent. Not daring to approach

too closely, lest some awkwardness might reveal to the watchful eyes of the *Spahis* that he had dared to use the garments of a Janissary as a disguise, Demetrius wandered on, obtaining through some curtain left unclosed, in order to admit the air, an occasional glimpse of the interior of the tents, the splendour of the hangings and furniture of which far surpassed his imaginings; but amidst the crowd of pavilions belonging to the Pachas, distinguished by the number of tails planted before their door, were mingled those of the Beys, Agas, and Nobles, in such confusion, that he began almost to despair of discovering that of the Vizier without addressing some inquiry to those around.

More than once Demetrius was obliged to retrace his steps, for the path was encumbered to a degree that any one not conversant with the mode of Turkish warfare, would have imagined themselves in a fair rather than the camp of a besieging army. Artisans of every calling had contrived to set up their shops in as much apparent security as though not on a field of battle; and mingled with the tents were sheds for the sale of sherbet and coffee, which, though partially closed, revealed to the

anxious glance of Demetrius hundreds of turbaned Infidels, sitting, cross-legged, upon mats, and as calmly and unmovedly enjoying themselves, as though the possibility did not exist that the morning sun might see the ground on which they sat, reddened by their blood.

One word—one movement inconsistent with the disguise he had assumed—would have betrayed Demetrius to his foe, and it required all the brave spirit within his breast, to refrain from any indication of fear when he discovered that, turn which way he would, a figure constantly glided upon his steps. Unflinching in his purpose, he moved steadily on; but his heart beat almost audibly, as, on passing before the door of a tent, from which issued a stream of light, the figure suddenly stood between him and the opening of the curtains, and he sickened with disgust as a hand was laid upon his arm, and he perceived the tall cap and flowing robe of a Dervish. The remembrance of the scenes he had witnessed in the convent rushed to his mind, and he hastily endeavoured to shake off the unwelcome touch; but in vain: and at length, yielding to an earnestness he

could neither comprehend nor resist, he suffered himself to be led, or rather pushed, into the shade of the tents between which he stood.

" Hush !" said the Dervish, in a whisper so low as to be scarcely audible ; " one word, and you are lost."

Demetrius started, and laid his hand on his sword.

" Follow me, but speak not," said the Dervish ; and Demetrius, again yielding to an undefinable impulse, quietly obeyed.

Not a word was spoken ; the dark figure of the Dervish, gliding through the mazes of the camp, was often scarcely discernible ; and several times Demetrius felt his hand seized as his conductor hurried him along. What was there in the pressure of that hand, wrapped in the long sleeve of the Dervish habit ? More than once the frame of Demetrius seemed to shiver beneath its grasp.

After many turnings and windings his guide stopped before a tent of larger dimensions than most of those they had passed, and having entered it, closed the curtain, and drew from a corner a robe similar to his own. Making a sign to Demetrius to

envelope himself in its folds, at the same time removing the ample turban worn by the Greek, he hastily substituted the high felt cap belonging to the Dervishes, over which he drew the hood of the robe in a manner similar to that in which his own was arranged, totally concealing the face of the wearer. The Greek soldier actually shuddered with horror, as he found himself thus transformed in appearance to one of the sect he so much abhorred; but his knowledge of Turkish customs went far to remove all feeling of alarm; for, aware of the full liberty in which the whole tribe of Dervishes perambulate an Ottoman camp, and the veneration in which they are held, he was convinced that a friend watched over his safety.

"And now," said the Dervish, as once more they moved forwards, "what would Demetrius of Ypsara in the midst of an enemy's camp?"

"You know me, then?" incautiously exclaimed Demetrius, almost aloud.

"Hush!" replied the Dervish, in a low whisper.

"I do—and would serve you. Tell me how I may do so—be quick—but"—seeing that Demetrius hesitated—"be honest."

" Lead me to the Vizier's tent, and let me see him alone."

" Alone," repeated the Dervish, somewhat bitterly; and Demetrius almost gasped for breath as he thought the tone was one that he recognised; but the Dervish again sinking his voice to the same whisper, continued, " Is it on thine own, or thy master's business thou hast come here?"

" My master's is my own—although my own may not be my master's," replied Demetrius, with a suppressed sigh.

The answer appeared to satisfy the Dervish; and after the pause of a moment, he said calmly, though in the same scarcely audible whisper, " Trust all, or nothing. If I do thy bidding, I must hear thy words, even though the Vizier be not aware of my presence."

" Be it so, then," replied Demetrius, whose confidence in his unknown friend had wonderfully increased within a short time.

Not another word was spoken. Soon the numerous guards and attendants they encountered, denoted the neighbourhood of some great personage; and the outer circle of tents being passed,

the crimson and gold hangings of the pavilion of the Vizier were visible from the light of many lamps which were hung around the entrance. Without impediment they gained the inner compartment of the tent; for such was the respect and superstitious reverence of the Ottomans of all grades for the Dervishes, that it was esteemed a high honour if any one of them condescended to take up his abode within the walls of a Turkish dwelling; and the prayers of the holy man were entreated by the favoured individual, who in the presence of his guest felt secure of salvation.

The surprise of Calil Pacha on the discovery of the supposed Dervish, was not a little amusing to Demetrius, who, as he gradually unfolded the plan which had been proposed, marked the look of trepidation with which the Vizier regarded the kneeling figure of the Dervish who had accompanied him, and who, with his back turned, was apparently occupied by his devotions.

"Assuredly, assuredly!" said the Vizier, hurriedly, as Demetrius concluded by a mention of the valuable presents from the Emperor, of which he was the bearer; "thy words are full of truth, and

thy Emperor a man of grace and bounty, not to mention the noble Elphenor. But the risk is fearful ——" and Calil looked around, as if in each fold of the rich drapery of his tent lurked a spy of his royal enemy.

" And your friend? good Demetrius," he added, as his eye lighted upon the figure of the kneeling Dervish. " I must speak with him—is he, too, a Greek?"

" Nay," exclaimed Demetrius, who saw that for some weighty reason the Dervish carefully concealed his person from the eye of the Vizier, " your Eminence has nothing to fear. The holy man I have long known—he has been deaf from his birth; the thunder of the cannon could not reach his ear, and his tongue is tied by a vow of silence, which your mightiness must well know by a Dervish is never broken."

The ready wit of Demetrius prevented a disclosure which, much as he himself desired it, might, he readily surmised, place the whole party in jeopardy; and after some further consultation, and promises of reward and favour from the Christian Emperor, Calil took his way to the tent of the Astrologer.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

The moments seemed as hours to the anxious Demetrius, before he was summoned by Calil Pacha to the presence of Almanzor, the chief astrologer to the Sultan. The interval had not passed very quietly, as appeared by the agitation of the Vizier. Either the cupidity of Almanzor was unsatisfied, or his conscience really smote him, when he found himself suddenly called upon at one blow to annihilate the hopes and fortune of his sovereign, by declaring the will of Heaven opposed to further proceedings against the Christians. Certain it was, that the refusal of the astrologer had never been so positive, nor his professions of attachment to Mahomet so profuse as upon this occasion. Slowly, and apparently with the greatest reluctance, did he at length consent; and the Vizier hastened to introduce to the presence of Almanzor the bearer of the promised bribe; for Demetrius, aware of the

abyss of treachery which in a Turkish government yawns on every side, had firmly refused to part with the jewels he bore, except to the person for whom they were destined.

He found Almanzor seated upon a cushion in the centre of the tent, around which the symbols of his art were carefully arranged, his own figure forming a strange contrast to the rest of the apartment; for though this was plain, even to meanness, the astrologer was clothed in a robe of flowered velvet, lined with costly sables, a fur only permitted to the Sultan and the highest of the nobles; while from his neck depended a chain of the most elaborate workmanship, representing the twelve signs of the Zodiac, in jewels of every colour. Rings glittered upon his fingers; and the high cap which he wore was one blaze of light from the magnificence of the gems with which it was adorned. It seemed a matter of difficulty to determine how much would be sufficient to tempt one already so rich; but Demetrius, aware of the immense value of the treasures entrusted to his care, boldly drew them from his vest, and laid them one by one on a low stool by the side of Almanzor. Calm and stately,

the thin face and deep set eye of the reader of the stars gave no token of surprise or admiration. Not so the Vizier. No sooner had the first of the articles produced by Demetrius met the eye of Calil, than an exclamation of surprise burst from his lips.

" Holy Alláh ! can it be possible—it is very like —but all pearls bear a close similitude—and those emeralds. Surely the villain has not dared—I will not believe it—tell me, my friend," said Calil, no longer able to contain himself, as he imagined he recognised the jewels, which were in fact his own, " whence hadst thou these gems ?"

" From the Emperor—my master," began Demetrius, " to whom a wealthy Jew ——"

" Ay, a Jewish merchant ! Levi by name ! Yes —yes. I see it all," exclaimed the Vizier, wildly, maddened by the thought that the very jewels of which he had hoped to make base merchandise in a distant land, had returned to bear witness as it were against him.

" Merciful Alláh ! I am betrayed—ruined," he exclaimed almost with a shriek, as the magnificent ruby of a form and size so remarkable, that it

must at once be recognised as that given by the Sultan to Elphenor, was added to the glittering heap now in the possession of the astrologer. "Good Almanzor—worthy friend—oh! suffer me but to return this ruby to the Christian soldier, and all I have shall be thine. Were but his Highness, the Sultan, to hear of it——"

At this moment, a low hissing laugh was heard in the tent, but from what quarter it had proceeded no one seemed to know. The ruby fell from the grasping fingers of Calil Pacha; Demetrius startled from his caution, laid his hand upon the dagger concealed beneath his vest; and even the attendant Dervish quitted his kneeling posture, and stood upright by the side of the young Greek. The astrologer alone appeared unmoved. It was as if the fiends, with whom he was supposed to hold converse, had whispered in his ear a language unknown to his companions; for he slowly raised his wand, and pointing to the curtain of black which veiled the entrance to the tent, motioned to his visitors to withdraw.

Surprised at this termination to their interview, Demetrius remained firm, until finding his hand

cautiously seized, and that his mysterious guide endeavoured to draw him from the spot where he stood, he made one effort more to secure the accomplishment of the scheme for which he had run so many risks. Making a deep obeisance to the astrologer, he said, with as much of respect as he could throw into his voice and manner, "Man of science and of might—thou to whom it is given to read the stars and to know the destiny of nations, tell me by what token I may show to my master that thou art favourable to his wishes?"

"Young man," said Almanzor, slowly; "as my years are many, so are my words few; the Vizier hath my promise—depart in peace!"

The deep voice of the astrologer, and the solemn manner of his address, overawed the feelings of contempt with which Demetrius had entered his presence; for even the minds of the Christians in those days were not untinged by a superstitious belief in the power of such as affected to pry into futurity. The astrologer had risen as he spoke, and raising the ebony wand which he held, again motioned to his visitors to depart.

With a low obeisance, Demetrius withdrew,

though ill satisfied with the success of his mission; but it was some time before Calil could summon courage to follow him, till seeing that Almanzor would not be further questioned, he also moved towards the door, still keeping his eyes rivetted on the jewels, amongst which the pear-shaped ruby glittered like a star of fire.

No sooner was he alone, than Almanzor, hastily securing the entrance, moved towards the opposite side of the tent, and drawing forth a slight iron rod, the wall of black cloth fell to the ground, and the Sultan stood before him. Bending low on one knee, Almanzor would have kissed the border of the imperial robe; but Mahomet, unheeding the salutation of his Astrologer, strode into the middle of the tent, and seizing upon the jewels that lay where Demetrius had placed them, exclaimed, in a voice almost inarticulate from fury,

" For every pearl on this string shall the traitor receive a hundred blows. Slave!—caitiff!—son of a dog! by the beard of the Holy Prophet, the day that I stand within the walls of Constantinople, the gold of the Christians shall pour molten down the throat that has dared thus to lie to his sove-

reign. Accursed traitor! every torture that skill can devise awaits thee at my first hour of leisure." Till then must I feign ignorance; and thou, Almanzor, see that the secret is kept, or, despite thy holy calling, shalt thou taste of my vengeance."

"May the glory of the universe number Almanzor among his deadliest foes, if the Vizier's name escape his lips until His Highness is avenged," obsequiously replied the Astrologer. "Yet night and day must I implore the pardon of Alláh, through the intercession of his Holy Prophet, for having even pretended to hearken to his treachery."

"It was well done, and Alláh is merciful!" answered the Sultan in a more moderate tone. "The Vizier is in favour with the people, and it were well to have some proof of his guilt, though had we none, his death had still been certain. Thou hast played thy part well, Almanzor."

The Astrologer bent low before his sovereign, well knowing that he alone possessed the power to tame the fiery spirit which, except when worked upon by superstition, recked neither of heaven nor of hell, whenever the gratification of his furious

passions was at stake. Long and deep was the conference which ensued, till Almanzor, who had his own reasons for so doing, at length persuaded the Sultan to postpone the general assault which he meditated for the morrow, until a more propitious conjunction of the planets should authorise the measure.

Though writhing with impatience, it never occurred to Mahomet to doubt the celestial influences; and he withdrew to his tent, to solace his perturbed spirit by inventing fresh cruelties to be practised towards the Christians who might fall into his hands.

In the meantime a stormy interview had taken place between Demetrius and the Vizier, until, satisfied by the reiterated protestations of Calil, that no doubt whatever existed as to the friendly disposition of the astrologer towards the Christians, and that the Vizier was equally prepared to assist the Emperor, whenever a favourable opportunity should occur, Demetrius took his leave, and, accompanied by his silent and mysterious guide, prepared again to traverse the mazes of the Infidel camp.

The moon now shone in full splendour; but,

wrapped in their disguise, the two Dervishes passed safely on, without question or remark. Still Demetrius could not help observing that when most distant from danger, the voice of his companion was lower than before, and his answers more brief and hurried. The gratitude which filled the heart of the young Greek, for his almost miraculous preservation, flowed in fervent protestations from his lips; and yet a monosyllable, or inclination of the head, was the only reply to his entreaty, that the name of his preserver might be revealed to him.

"Tell me, at least, thy name, that I may join it in my prayers with the one that ever rises to my lips," were the words of Demetrius, as they stood once more on the brink of the ditch which separated them from the walls of the city. The Dervish shook his head, but vouchsafed no reply.

"Is there nothing that I can do?" said Demetrius, bitterly, "to prove my eternal gratitude?"

"The ring that is on thy finger," whispered his companion; "I would keep that as an earnest of thy faith."

"My ring!" exclaimed Demetrius, as he raised

to his lips the ruby which had been the parting gift of Chezmé. "Ask my life; nay, a thousand lives, had I them to give, should be sacrificed, ere that ring quitted my finger."

"A talisman, perhaps?" said the Dervish inquiringly.

"Mine, at least," answered Demetrius, passionately. "My hope,—my life,—my very soul is bound up with this, and none but the hand that gave shall have power to claim it whilst I breathe."

Demetrius, as his mind turned to the hour and the scene when that ring had been placed upon his finger, raised his clasped hands towards heaven, and remained for a few moments as if in prayer. Suddenly he started; a sigh—a soft and stifled sigh, had reached his ear. Was it the low moan of the night wind? or the spirit of his loved Chezmé come to answer to his prayer? Demetrius could not tell - - - He looked around, but no one was near; and even the dim outline of the flowing robes of the Dervish, as he retreated towards the camp of the Infidels, was fast disappearing in the gloom.

## CHAPTER XXV.

The wrath of the baffled Sultan grew more fierce, as the brightest efforts of his genius were foiled by the sturdy vigilance of his foe; while the position of the besieged became every moment more desperate. To defend themselves within their walls was now their only aim; for every attempt at a sally had been attended with so much loss, that the garrison was reduced to less than half of its original strength.

The treasury was empty, provisions were failing, and discontent rapidly gaining ground. No effort or self-denial practised by the young Emperor, infused the slightest spirit into the breast of the dastard Greeks. To save themselves, and their property, was their only wish; and more than once, as the brave and noble Constantine had appeared before his subjects as a suppliant, he had been

greeted with taunts and reproaches for not acceding to the degrading terms upon which alone Mahomet had declared that he would spare the lives of the citizens. The anguish which filled the heart of the Emperor, on beholding the ingratitude and abject spirit of a people he had cherished, was only equalled by the unparalleled energy and devotion he displayed. To this young Prince, born in luxury, and whose natural inclination had been a life of pleasure and of ease, the first touch of adversity had been like that of an enchanter's wand. He had been transformed at once into a hero. Forgetting his habits of indolence and state, every effort was exerted to rescue his people from a fate which, in the sublime elevation of his soul, he hourly and fervently prayed might fall on him alone, as alone deserving the wrath of heaven for the supineness of his former life.

Accompanied by his faithful friends, Elphenor and Demetrius, the Emperor, sometimes on foot, sometimes on horseback, visited every spot where his presence might encourage, or his sympathy console. Daily prayers were offered up in all the churches; but neither the sincerity which the faith-

ful adherents of Constantine manifested on all occasions, nor, what was more extraordinary, the feeling of common danger, could touch the hearts of those whose idol was gold, and to whom bigotry and prejudice supplied the place of religion.

At the hour when the cannon thundered at their gates; when the brave and the noble fell before their eyes; when palaces were transformed to hospitals, and the beggar and the prince alike cried aloud to heaven for a morsel of bread for their famishing infants — even then were the churches of the Most High desecrated by schism, and false preachers deluded the divided people, till in very madness they were ready to fall upon each other, both parties imagining, in the fury of their zeal, that heaven only demanded the sacrifice of the opposing sect, as a retribution for its apostacy.

The misery of the Romans was at its height. Worn out and dispirited, even the most faithful began to despair. The siege had now lasted more than a month; and as the eyes of the wretched citizens rested upon the boundless view of the Turkish camp, hope died in every breast. The last hour was nearly come. The city could not hold out

another day, and it was determined that one furious sally should take place, and that, surrounded by a chosen troop, Constantine should endeavour to cut his way through the camp of the enemy.

It was the middle of May, and the bright sun of summer shone gladly on the city of the doomed. The famishing and the wounded turned with a sickening shudder from the bright ray; but from none did the sob of agony burst with a more bitter pang than from the breast of the young monarch, as he looked upon the rising beam—and knew that ere sunset, from the spot where he stood, the crescent might gleam and the banner of the Infidel wave! To perish nobly, sword in hand, was the only hope that was left; and as, after having first attended a solemn mass, and received the sacrament in the church of Santa Sophia, the brave band of soldiers gathered slowly in the open space before the gate of the city, the stern brow of many might have been seen to relax, as with one long look they bade adieu to home and to life.

One by one, and in silence, the officers took their appointed stations; and when the devoted troop, headed by their young and gallant sovereign,

marched onwards, towards the principal gate, many a bold heart swelled, and many a cheek grew pale, as the cry of anguish from balcony or lattice told that upon their doomed heads fond eyes were looking their last.

Close behind the Emperor, came Elphenor and Demetrius, faithful even unto death! The word was given. Already the head of the column had entered the narrow street leading to the towers upon the wall, when the hand of Elphenor was suddenly grasped by Constantine, who had turned to look once more upon the scene he was about to quit for ever. That flash upon the bosom of the waters! Whence came it? None could answer, ere the sullen boom of the gun had startled every ear. The brave troop had halted before the word of their sovereign could reach them. Another and another shot was heard, and then the quick discharge of the lesser guns peculiar to the Turkish vessels, showed that the conflict had begun. The firing was from far below the port. Hope dawned in every bosom, and every heart stood still until the smoke had cleared away, and then a cry of exultation broke from the lips of Constantine.

" They have not forgotten me!" he exclaimed, pointing to the stately gallies of Genoa, which now appeared upon the waters of the Bosphorus.

" My people, ye shall yet be saved;" cried Constantine, as he bounded forward towards the rising ground, which commanded a more extended view of the straits.

His hope was not deceived. The promised succour was at hand; and no sooner had the intelligence been made known, than all order was forgotten in the city. The inhabitants rushed into the streets, and, mingling with the soldiers and the priests, pressed onwards, until the Seven Hills were one mass of living beings; while a shout of joy burst from the multitude, till the heavens re-echoed its sound. Hope lighted up every face, and the people, thus suddenly snatched from despair, gave themselves up to the extravagance of joy, encouraging, by their cries, the efforts which their gallant friends were making, to force the line of Ottoman ships which guarded the entrance to the port.

Meanwhile the Sultan was not idle. Alarmed by the firing, he had quitted his camp, and

mounting his horse, hastened to the nearest point from which he could obtain a distinct view of the Bosphorus. One glance showed him the Genoese vessels already advanced to within a short distance of the port. The evident inferiority of his naval force, added to the frenzy with which he viewed the impending succour that promised to the Christians a chance of escape. Maddened by the prospect of delay, if not failure, at the moment when he knew that the resources of the city were exhausted, he gave way to the most violent expressions of rage; at one time urging the noble steed that bore him into the midst of the waves; at another, threatening with instant death, not only the Capitan Pacha, Baltha Oglou, but every sailor on board his fleet; and then again, as success seemed to waver, encouraging, by word and gesture, the very persons he had just denounced, as though imagining that his voice could reach them through the roar of the battle.

The scene at this instant was most exciting and splendid. Hemmed in by sea and land, the seven-hilled city lay in her helpless beauty, in the very arms of her foe; and struggling to her release

came the brave Giustiniani, with his followers, from Genoa and Venice, fighting their way through the Infidel fleet, which, as a swarm of locusts, darkened the face of the waters. Far away to the East stretched the forests of the Asiatic shore, losing themselves in the deep shadow of the mountains; while the more gentle Western hills, covered with the Ottoman tents, were gleaming in the morning sun, white as the summit of Olympus; and beneath, upon the bosom of that narrow strait, whose shores smiled in the gladness of their beauty, the blue wave was reddening in the death struggle of that spirit which never sleeps—the strife between man and man.

More than once the hearts of the Christians trembled, as the power of numbers threatened to prevail. The odds were fearful. But at length the triumph of discipline became apparent, and the five noble vessels forced their way through a fleet of three hundred sail, and safely anchored within the port of the Golden Horn.

With tears of joy Constantine and his people welcomed their brave allies, and the supplies of corn, and of money, with the efficient aid of four

hundred men, again raised the spirits of the Christians.

The desperation of the Sultan increased every moment. The siege was renewed with vigour; and the day after the arrival of Giustiniani, his eyes were greeted by a sight of such unequalled barbarity as almost to strike the beholders with madness. All night long the air had been filled with shrieks of the most heart-rending distress; but it was not till the morning that the cause was revealed to the besieged, when the opposite side of the ditch presented a forest of upright spikes, upon each of which the brutal Mahomet had caused a Christian prisoner to be impaled; and the heat of the sun increasing the misery of those who still survived the tortures of the night, their piteous cries for water filled the breasts of the hearers with horror and despair.

Distracted by the impossibility of affording relief to the suffering wretches, the usual gentleness and humanity of the Christian Emperor forsook him; and ordering every Turkish prisoner to the walls, they were instantly beheaded, and their bodies left exposed to the view of their countrymen. Each

day added fresh horrors to the siege, until the busy brain of Mahomet devised a scheme unequalled in daring and skill. In the dead of the night, the neck of land which runs behind the suburb of Galata, was completely covered over, the boards being rendered slippery by the fat of oxen rubbed upon them. A road was thus contrived, by which the port of the Golden Horn might be reached; and during the darkness, no less than seventy ships were safely drawn across the Isthmus by the force of pullies and the united strength of thousands, driven by the scourge to perform a feat apparently beyond the power of man.

The following day, terror seized upon the Christians. Seventy Turkish vessels were riding at anchor in the bosom of their harbour. To defend themselves on both sides was impossible; and sword in hand, the Emperor once more put himself at the head of his troops, now nerved to iron by despair. The evident treachery of the Genoese merchants of Galata redoubled the apprehension within the city; while the Ottoman troops, wild with the excitement of delay, clamoured for permission for a general assault.

Still the Sultan hesitated. Almanzor declared the heavens unpropitious; but at length, overcome by the anxiety of Mahomet, the Astrologer pronounced the fatal word. The 29th of May was chosen as the auspicious day by the conjunction of the planets, and the Sultan proclaimed that honour and reward, according to his option, should be the portion of him who first stood upon the walls of Constantinople. But while his words breathed kindness, his heart was steeled to all human feeling, and he only waited the rising of the sun to effect a diabolical scheme, by which he secured from failure his final attempt upon the city.

He caused a proclamation to be made through the camp, inviting every artisan and follower to assemble before the walls; and thus having collected an immense crowd of unsuspecting wretches, he, at the head of his Janissaries, charged upon the unoffending multitude, forcing them onward until the ditch was filled with living beings; and the Janissaries, rushing to the attack, drowned the cries of the victims with shouts of "Alláh! Alláh!"

The doom of the city was sealed. The angle of the tower above the gate of St. Romanus, gave

way before the battery which played upon it; the crumbling stone fell with a heavy crash into the ditch; and Constantine, wearing his crown and imperial mantle, appeared in the breach. Vainly were the shields of the devoted few, whose love for their Emperor made them heedless of self, interposed to ward off the blows which were heaped upon him! With one hand, the brave Demetrius tore from his shoulders the purple mantle which marked the Emperor to the eyes of all, while with the other he tried to parry the attacks directed at him, until a stroke from a sabre cleft his own helmet. Bewildered by the blow, he scarcely heeded the voice which summoned him to surrender, nor perceived that the soldier who twined his arms around him, seemed more anxious to protect than to injure. The Janissary stooped to the ear of Demetrius. One word appeared suddenly to revive the spirit of the young Greek, and his eye brightened as he permitted the friendly hand of his victor to drag him beneath the shelter of a projecting buttress.

The Emperor was still unhurt. Step by step, and inch by inch, the Christians disputed the

ground with their enemies, who, in overwhelming numbers, now mounted the breach, till at length, a cry from Giustiniani, as he received a wound, caught the ear of Demetrius. For an instant, Constantine turned his head to implore—to command the Italian to stay and rally his flinching followers, who were retreating from the walls. That instant was fatal! A blow from a Janissary pierced the heart of the monarch. He sank upon his knee, and tried to raise his shield above his head; but the effort was vain. His arm drooped — the sword fell from his grasp; and in another moment, the last Emperor of the Greeks—Constantine, the young, the noble, and the brave, was numbered with the dead!

## CHAPTER XXVI.

The fall of their Emperor was the signal of defeat to the unhappy Greeks, who, no longer sustained by the spirit and courage of their brave Prince, bent to the conquering foe, as grass before the scythe. All opposition ceased, and those who encountered the full tide of the torrent of enemies, which now poured in on all sides, were either slain or made prisoners.

Intoxicated with joy, which, for the time, gave to his character a want of caution foreign to its nature, Mahomet entered the city. Forgetting, in his pride, that it was his own interest to preserve, in all its splendour, the conquest which he had achieved, he himself gave the example of the most wanton excesses, striking and mutilating, with insane ferocity, even the most beautiful works of art that lay upon his passage. He paused, for an instant, on reaching the Hippodrome; his en-

lightened taste seemed to forbid such profanation; but when his eyes fell upon the splendid monuments of each era of science and of art collected upon the spot, a savage smile again gleamed upon his features; and as though to spare any thing prized by the Christians were an act of too much leniency, he raised once more his ponderous battle-axe, and with a blow struck off one of the heads of the brazen serpents, which formed the celebrated column in the centre of the arena.

Encouraged by his example, the work of devastation was continued by his followers, and the city was instantly a scene of pillage and of blood. The shrieking inhabitants submitted in vain. All were massacred who had not succeeded in obtaining a temporary concealment.

In the midst of this scene of horror, one spot alone offered a contrast so striking as to afford a lamentable demonstration of the power of superstition and credulity over fear. For some time past it had been announced to the people, by one of those impostors, who, in all ages, have found it possible to delude, at least a portion of their hearers, that, in a vision from heaven, it had been

revealed to him, that, in the event of the fall of Constantine, the Sultan would enter the city; but upon his arrival at a particular spot, his power against the Christians would cease, and the angel of the Lord would stand, with a drawn sword, to prevent the entrance of the Infidels into the church of Saint Sophia! So firmly had this delusion taken hold of the mind of the people, that the interior of the immense structure was filled — not with the shrieking or the faint, but with citizens and priests, merchants and nobles, artisans and soldiers,—all calm and collected, sustained by their blind credulity, and patiently awaiting the supernatural delivery they had so long been taught to expect. It was a bitter sight, to see the old and grey-headed, the mailed warrior and the bearded sage, trying to infuse into the minds of the weeping and terrified women within the church, not the spirit of resignation befitting all Christians, but the impious feeling of certainty, that a miracle was about to be performed for their relief, and that the will of God encouraged this blind reliance, which forbade all human effort at escape.

Such were the doctrines that resounded on all

sides, and many listened and were appeased; for in Constantinople superstition was at its height, and the host of fanatics which had that day poured from the monasteries and convents of the city into the sacred edifice of Saint Sophia, was for the most part incapable of aught but a blind submission to the dictates of others.

There was one, however, who stood apart from the mass. Ida, the loved and loving wife of Elphenor was there, with her infant child. Alone, and unprotected, she sought not in that infatuated crowd for counsel or consolation; but, kneeling at the foot of the cross, she raised in her trembling arms the sleeping form of Melanthe, imploring for her beloved child that release from danger and from death which she dared not hope for herself!

Absorbed by her prayers, and the deep sorrowing of her already widowed heart, she did not observe the sudden movement which had taken place within the building. It was as though a sharp gust of wind had passed over the bosom of a lake, so immediate was the rocking to and fro of the sea of heads which covered the immense floor of the church. The deadened sound of many voices

hushed to a whisper followed—every one seemed to have asked some question of his neighbour—then all again was silent and still! Each gallery, nook, and window, crowded to excess, appeared as if filled with statues. The monks suspended their preaching—the fanatic was struck dumb—children forgot to weep, and nuns to pray,—and even the trembling mother hushed her sob in that moment of horrible suspense, made yet more horrible by the utter uncertainty of the quarter from whence the alarm had proceeded.

That there was cause for alarm no heart in that vast assembly dared to deny. The freezing chill of terror was visible on every brow. Each stood as though turned to stone—while, within the breast, that deep storehouse of deceit and falsehood, which, if closed to other eyes, yet is open to our own, at the first angry glance of heaven, human fallacies, and human strength withered and vanished - - - Danger was at hand—danger and death in its most fearful form. Who should now save them? who could save them, but the God whom they had impiously braved by their trust in human aid? and as if this truth at once rushed to every heart, the whole of the trembling multitude simultaneously sunk upon their knees.

Alas! it was too late for hope. In another instant the dreadful fate that was approaching was made manifest to them. The crowds which had filled the upper galleries of the church were seen hurrying from the windows; and the fearful cries of "They are coming! they are coming!—they have passed the square—barricade the doors," were soon drowned in the shrieks of the multitude. The predictions of their false prophets were as air; and the unhappy people thus found themselves without hope of escape! Their eyes were opened!—they now saw how they had been deceived; and when this bitter conviction forced itself upon them, the cry of despair and agony which arose almost made the Moslem tigers quail, whilst about to spring upon their prey.

The unhappy Ida, startled from her devotions, gazed wildly round; but not one glance of sympathy met her eye! Each was thinking of himself, till the broken accents of a foreign tongue fell upon her ear; and kneeling by her side she perceived the form of Hassan, who, dressed as a Greek, had followed her from the house of Elphenor. In the midst of her own sorrow the look of the unhappy Mussulman pierced the kind heart of Ida. If the

fate of the Greeks was certain, how much more so was the fate of him who had betrayed his sovereign. The tortures which would be his portion were already pourtrayed upon his face; and Ida, desirous of imparting some comfort, endeavoured, in the pauses of the din which filled the church, to instil some feeling of courage into his mind.

"Hassan!" she said, "you have eaten of our bread, and drank of our cup, if I fall—you will protect my child?"

"When was a Mussulman ever ungrateful?" was the only answer of the trembling Hassan; and, as he spoke, he stretched out his arms towards the infant.

"Not yet, not yet!" cried Ida, distractedly, clasping Melanthe closer to her breast: "but take these jewels; if you escape, they will be of service to you," and she put into his hand a small packet.

"Hark! that is their cry! Holy Prophet, protect us!" gasped the terrified Hassan. "Lady! haste further back, among the shrines. Oh! God of heaven, they come! Hark!—how they batter the door - - - does it yield? No, no; thousands press against it. Again, Holy Alláh! the cries of

the Janissaries wax louder—the door - - - it opens. Oh, Father of Mercy!—Holy Prophet! we are lost;" and the miserable Hassan fell down behind a pillar, covering his face with his garment, imagining that, notwithstanding his having adopted the dress of the Greeks, he must instantly be discovered, and that the first vengeance of the Infidels would fall upon him.

Then commenced that horrible scene of butchery and violence, unsurpassed in the annals of history, where thousands of helpless, unarmed creatures were slaughtered in a moment; while those who were spared knew that they were only reserved for a still worse fate, and looked with envy on the lifeless around!

Twice had the high spirited Ida, as she marked the separation of some of the youngest and fairest of the nuns from their more aged sisterhood, drawn from her bosom the poniard which she treasured as a last resource; but each time the helpless babe she held had cried as it found itself disturbed, and that cry had overcome the firmness of the heart upon which its infant head was pillowed. Could she abandon her child? With a movement of despera-

tion, Ida cast the dagger from her hand, and burying her head upon the face of Melanthe, remained for a little while concealed by the projection of an altar, until she was dragged from her hiding place by some Turkish soldiers, who, satiated with slaughter, were selecting those they thought worthy to be carried off as prisoners. A few words, in a tone of insult, indistinctly reached her ear; but as she was forced along, one of the barbarians perceived the child, and instantly seized upon it. Ida broke from the grasp of the soldiers, and throwing herself at the feet of a Turk, who appeared of a higher grade than his companions, she implored him to have pity on her—to restore her child.

"It is the child of Elphenor!—I am his wife! You shall have gold," she exclaimed; but she had unconsciously thrown fuel on the flame, for, with an insulting laugh, the men only the more rudely forced her onwards, while their comrade turning round, cast the infant from his arms. The terrible shriek of the unhappy mother half diverted his attention; and he did not see that a friendly hand had caught the babe, ere it was dashed to pieces on the marble floor. But Ida had seen it. In that moment of terror,

of agony, and of blood, the mother's eye had seen a form she knew, rise up to snatch the innocent from death. Hassan, whom she had tended, now saved for her that life far dearer than her own. She had seen him fold the infant to his breast, and had blessed him as she looked. It was the last look of the mother upon her child!

## CHAPTER XXVII.

Constantinople had fallen ! The glory of the empire of the Greeks had perished, and for ever ! and in the palace of the Cæsars, dwelt their most deadly foe ! Mahomet, the Sultan of the Ottomans, had given, in accordance with his oath, the lives and heritage of the Christians to his Moslem subjects.

On the third day after his entrance into the city, he seemed for the first time to awake from the dream of insane delight, into which he had been plunged by success ; and issued an edict, by which the Turks were commanded to abstain from further plunder or deeds of violence. He at length appeared to remember, that the blood that flowed around him, was now drawn from the breasts of his own subjects. But with this order ended all exertion which the Sultan appeared disposed to make.

Satisfied as to the death of Constantine, whose

body had been found under a heap of slain, so covered with wounds, that the imperial features could not be distinguished, and that the golden eagles worked upon his shoes, alone testified his rank, Mahomet had contented himself with the cowardly act of ordering the head of the Emperor to be exposed above the gate of St. Romanus, the post which he had so long and gallantly defended. The mighty Sultan then abandoned himself to his pleasures, little imagining that within the walls of his palace, which now contained all that was fairest and noblest among the Christian women, he should meet with an opposition so determined, as to engross that time and attention, which ought to have been devoted to his subjects.

But so it was; and a suppliant at the feet of the beauteous Ida, Mahomet had condescended to remain, from the hour when her matchless charms had shown him the inferiority of all he had hitherto deemed peerless. Perhaps it was the novelty of the situation, which caught the sated fancy of the Monarch—perhaps it was the charm of meeting for the first time in a woman's form, a mind above disguise, and a soul above fear.

The intellect of Mahomet was capable of such distinction; and it appeared as though some secret influence had suddenly arisen, to induce a restraint of those unbridled passions, which had hitherto raged without a check.

The unhappy Ida was bowed down by grief. Notwithstanding all her entreaties, her husband's fate still remained concealed from her, while that of her child was equally uncertain. Surrounded by the slaves of the Sultan, who possibly were as ignorant as they pretended to be, Ida could gain no intelligence of what passed without; and yet, in the midst of woes so terrible, the spirit of the noble woman did not fail. Well versed in the character and temper of the tyrant who assailed her, she forebore to reproach or to irritate; and concealing her wretchedness beneath an appearance of calm dignity, she continued to maintain over the mind of Mahomet the ascendancy she had gained. Thus had many days elapsed; and the Sultan, yielding to the fascination which enthralled him, turned from the willing and the weak, with whom his harem was crowded, to the novel task of endeavouring to soften the proud Christian beauty, whose firmness

and reliance upon the God to whom she prayed for support, while he openly attempted to deride, he secretly respected.

At such a time, the seclusion to which the Sultan devoted himself, was an event so unlooked for, that from impatience the public feeling rose to indignation; and as the promises which had been held out, seemed in no way likely to be realized, a spirit of rebellion sprung into life, which the undisciplined state of the troops rendered of vital consequence. So rapidly did this feeling spread, that at length the Mufti undertook to represent to his sublime master the disaffection of the people, who, greedy of reward, murmured loudly against the edict forbidding further plunder, and claimed the promised recompence for their protracted labours during the siege. The news produced in the bosom of the Sultan a revolution of feeling so violent, that all effort at self-controul was unavailing.

Well might Ida tremble afresh, as she marked the look of ferocity which lighted up, with the fury of a demon, the handsome countenance of her royal suitor; and her heartsunk, as, one morning

at an earlier hour than usual, she beheld him enter her apartment. For a little while he looked upon her without speaking; then advancing towards her, he took her hand with unusual gentleness, and the courage of Ida grew more faint, as she listened to accents almost faltering, from emotion.

"Ida," said Mahomet, "the hour has come when your own words must decide upon your fate. The leisure of the Sultan of the Ottomans is not his own. Already my people murmur. Thou art the cause!—The slaves," he added more fiercely, "dare to question their master, and complain of the time that I give to thee."

"Listen—oh, listen to their voice," exclaimed Ida. "Return to great deeds, and leave me to die in peace; or," she continued, as for the first time she threw herself at the feet of Mahomet, "as you are mighty, be generous; restore me to my husband, and my child, if indeed they still live."

The attitude of Ida was so touching, her voice so soft, that Mahomet for an instant appeared to hesitate, as if some better feeling was struggling with the determination he had formed. She was so beautiful as she knelt before him, with tears like the

dew upon the rose leaf, glittering on her cheek; while the impassioned tenderness of her dove-like eyes, as she thought upon those so dear to her, seemed to irradiate her whole form, that a human heart could scarely steel itself against her prayers; but Mahomet, when the fierce passions, which formed the prominent features of his character, were once aroused within him, had not a human heart. Still the love which the beauty and holiness of Ida had kindled in the bosom of the tyrant, partook more of softness than any feeling he had ever before experienced; again the cruel look somewhat faded from his countenance, and raising Ida from the ground, he said,

"For the last time, I ask you to be mine. Ida, I love you, as I never before have believed it possible to love. Cannot my affection atone to you for what you have lost? You shall be my wife. The bride of the Sultan is no mean estate ——"

"Urge me no more," replied Ida firmly; "my life is your's; my honour is my own—and my husband's," she added faintly, as she raised her eyes to heaven, "even should he have quitted this earth for ever!"

" Ida!" said Mahomet quickly, " your husband lives, and is unhurt."

A cry of rapture from his poor captive interrupted the words of the Sultan. He paused, and looked almost sadly upon the woman whose faith and affection were so much stronger than her fear. " Shall I ever be loved even as this woman loves?" was his secret thought, as he gazed upon Ida with reverence. But she saw him not;—her thoughts were with the captive in his dungeon, and her beloved child; and in that paroxysm of agony her mind glanced back to the tenderness of other days—the happiness of their peaceful home—the blessings of their mutual love; and, as the recollection of later events rushed to her thoughts, and the misery of separation, the fear of dishonour, and the agony of suspense again darkened the vision of brightness conjured up by the name of her husband, Ida turned her eyes to him who stood by her side.

Mahomet, the author of all this woe, was now a suppliant for her love. Disregarding the shudder which accompanied her look, the Sultan spoke once more:—

" Yes, Ida! your husband lives. Listen to my

words. You refuse to enter my harem—I have not enforced what you have refused. In return for this forbearance, promise me that you will become its inmate but for even for one day, nay, for one hour," he added hastily, as he marked the look of horror on the face of his captive; "for one hour only; and I swear by all that a Mussulman holds most sacred, that the next shall see you restored to the arms of Elphenor. Think, Ida, of what you renounce—a life of happiness—of wealth—with the husband you love—the child in whom you delight. Think, ere you refuse the prayer of one who might command, yet stoops to implore,—will you not save your husband?"

The head of Ida was bowed upon her hands, but the long slender fingers could not conceal the burning blush which crimsoned the face of the unhappy woman. It was the struggle of a noble nature against temptation almost too powerful. The life of her husband and child—her own liberty—perhaps even her existence; and the tempter was a monarch, young, handsome, and to her, generous; for to her had he not altered his manner, nay his very nature seemed changed, since he had learned to

love. For one instant Ida hesitated; but a mind like her's could not contemplate dishonour. Slowly the colour faded from her cheek, and, as she raised her head, the marble fixedness of her brow, and the compression of her pale lips, told Mahomet that his prayer was refused, ere her low distinct accents met his ear.

"The wife of a Christian," she said, "may not hearken to such words."

"Ida! think—are you resolved?" cried Mahomet, passionately.

"I am; to welcome death before dishonour;" calmly replied the unhappy woman, lifting her eyes meekly to Heaven.

The Sultan did not answer, but strode fiercely to and fro in the chamber. He was evidently lashing himself into fury, and deigned no further to remonstrate or implore. The days since he had known Ida he had passed as though in a trance. His dream had been of love—he awoke to hatred. As he passed a window of the palace, the sound of many voices met his ear, and he could see the crowds gathering in the open space of the Hippodrome. Once more he approached Ida. "My people," he

said, "have dared to murmur that I have given to you those hours which should have been devoted to their interests. Suffer me to show them the cause of my neglect. The prisoners too await their doom, and all are gathered before the Palace gates. Let me lead you thither, your husband will be there."

Thus saying, he took the hand of the astonished Ida, and leading her forth, she soon found herself in the centre of a circle, which, opening as the Sultan advanced, gave to her view the multitude beyond; and, as Mahomet had predicted, at a short distance stood Elphenor, at the head of a group of panic-stricken prisoners, who doubted not they had been assembled to hear their sentence of death or torture.

The heart of Ida throbbed wildly, as she met the eye of her husband; and the smile with which she stretched out her hands towards him relieved the noble Greek of his most dreadful fear. His Ida could not have looked thus upon the face of her husband, had she been unworthy of his love. Meanwhile the Sultan was giving orders to those of his officers who were nearest, and the circle was suddenly compressed by the advance of the crowd,

until Ida found herself within a few feet of the spot were Elphenor stood. With a cry she could not wholly suppress, she sprang forward, as if to throw herself upon his breast; but the quick eye of Mahomet was upon her, and catching her arm, he once again whispered, "Ida, consent, before it is too late—consent to my prayer."

"Never," said Ida, boldly, encouraged by the presence of him, for whom she would have died a thousand deaths, had it been possible.

A scowl of hate darkened the brow of Mahomet; and turning to the people, as still he held the arm of Ida, he exclaimed, in a voice trembling with passion, "It hath been told to the Sultan that his people have dared to murmur, and say that a woman, and a Christian, has turned him from his care of the true believers and followers of the Holy Prophet. Let those who audaciously question the conduct of their Prince adore the clemency which spares their rebellious lives, and learn, from his example, to sacrifice their own wishes to the general good. You see this woman—she is fair to look upon." A murmur of admiration burst from every lip.

" It is true that I love her. Now behold how Mahomet can sever a tie which would lead him from his duty."

Scarcely had the words passed his lips when, with a suddenness which defied all interposition, he retreated a step—the next instant the flash of a scimitar was seen, and at one blow the head of the beautiful Ida fell to the ground. A shriek from the multitude, and then the murmur of many voices filled the air; but far above all rung out *one* cry, so long and bitter, that it thrilled through every bosom of that savage crowd. It was the cry of the broken heart—the strong man's agony; and before the order of the inhuman Sultan that the head of the murdered Ida should be given to Elphenor could be heard, Elphenor lay senseless upon the earth.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

The barbarous deed, which had been devised and executed by Mahomet, as a means of striking terror into the hearts of his subjects, so far produced the effect intended as to lull the growing spirit of disaffection. The Sultan, once more secure of his people, began to turn his attention towards those who remained of the former inhabitants of the city.

Besides the countless multitude of the slain, sixty thousand Greeks had been sold as slaves; and Mahomet, being somewhat appeased, now caused a proclamation to be made to the effect, that all Greeks and Romans who chose to dwell at Constantinople were at liberty to do so, and to follow their respective callings. Relieved from immediate fear of death, there arose on all sides symptoms of that servile spirit inherent in a degenerate people; and such of the Greeks, and they were not a few, who had secreted the wealth which,

properly applied, might yet have preserved them as a nation, now laid their treasures at the feet of their conqueror, with abject meanness imploring him to accept that gold, of which they declared their former sovereign to have been unworthy. Mahomet was too politic openly to encourage treachery. The only answer they received, was a bitter taunt for their avarice, and an order for instant execution.

All minor concerns having been disposed of, the vindictive nature of the Sultan burned for revenge upon an individual, against whom he cherished unbounded hatred. The treacherous correspondence of Calil Pacha with the Christians, had long been suspected by Mahomet, even before the secret interview in the tent of the astrologer had revealed to him the extent of the baseness of the Vizier; yet, with such infinite cunning had the Sultan contrived to dissemble, that Calil reposed in the confidence of having totally escaped suspicion. The defeat of Constantine had shown him the fallacy of his speculations, and ever since Mahomet entered Constantinople, the zeal and officiousness of the Vizier had increased tenfold. What was

his consternation, when, one morning, as he was quietly seated in the magnificent palace Mahomet had bestowed upon him, and occupied in the agreeable calculation of the amount of treasure he had obtained, he received a summons to attend upon the Sultan; and on emerging from his palace, perceived that his usual attendants were replaced by the guard of his Royal Master, before whom he was immediately conducted.

The array in which Mahomet waited to receive him, was little calculated to re-assure the trembling culprit. Anxious to give some appearance of justice to the punishment of the first officer of his empire, the Sultan appeared seated beneath a magnificent canopy upon the throne in the Hippodrome, surrounded by his court, dressed in the habits of ceremony. The Mufti, attended by the Mollahs and the whole body of the Uléma, was present, occupying a large space on the right of the throne; while on the left, a body of Emirs, with their green turbans, rose before the eyes of the unhappy Vizier. The inner ring of the circle was lined by the Ethiop guard of the Sultan, the dark-visaged soldiers, set off by turbans of

bright scarlet; while, outside the line, which they kept with drawn swords in their hands, rose a motley group, where might be seen the long locks of the Greek mingling with the white turban of the Moslem and the high felt cap of the Dervish. But it was not upon the splendour glittering around the throne, nor yet upon the multitude crowding that arena, which, until the foot of the Moslem had trodden down its glories, had ever been the scene of joy and of triumph, that the eye of the wretched Calil lingered, until, as if fascinated by the horror the vision inspired, it could behold no other object. Close beside the throne stood four figures—negroes, so horribly deformed, that, to look upon them would have been a punishment. Their huge heads, with curly grizzled locks, and their monstrous arms, seemed scarcely to belong to the dwarfish and misshapen bodies which supported them. As they grasped the *Falaka*, or instrument of the bastinado, then turned their rolling eyes towards the unhappy Vizier, the heart of Calil Pacha sunk within him. With tottering steps, he advanced towards the throne, prostrating himself humbly before his sovereign.

The eye of Mahomet glistened with unusual ferocity, while a smile of triumph now and then indicated the inward complacency of the tyrant at having so thoroughly outwitted his enemy. As Calil rose from the ground, and laying his fingers upon his mouth and forehead, awaited the interrogatories he felt were impending, the Mufti advanced towards him, and put into his hands a scroll, upon which his accusation was inscribed. No sooner had Calil glanced his eye over the words, than he saw that his doom was sealed! and falling upon his knees, implored the mercy of his sovereign. For a moment, Mahomet seemed to gloat upon the agony of his victim, smiling sternly as he looked upon the writhing form of Calil, who, as he addressed his prayers to the throne, kept his eye constantly fixed upon the executioners; then the Sultan, rising with the dignity he so well knew how to assume, said—

"Calil Pacha, thy words are as water spilled into a stream—they pass away, and the bosom of the river is still as before. So does thy speech fall on the ear of the Sultan of the Universe - - - his ear closes ere the sound has passed. Calil Pacha, thou art a traitor—a drunkard—and an unfaithful

follower of the Holy Prophet!—therefore shalt thou die;—and as thy crimes have been three—so shall thy punishment be divided into three separate portions. First, for thy treachery in receiving bribes from the Christians, shalt thou be beaten with rods of gold. Next, for thy drunkenness, thou shalt be plunged in boiling wine; and, lastly, the tower of salt* shall complete the measure of the penalty thou must undergo for thy crimes!"

A shriek of agony from the Vizier followed the declaration of the Sultan; but the ferocious countenance of the young despot gave no hope of mercy; and the Vizier was much too well versed in the modes of a Turkish trial to dream of attempting any defence.

"Thou criest for mercy," said Mahomet, with the smile of a demon, "and for thy crimes against ourselves might we be merciful; but thou hast sinned against Alláh! and the Holy Mahomet his

* The tower of salt was a large open tower, the sides of which were composed of pillars of salt, while from the floor and the roof innumerable spikes projected. The culprit was placed in a swing suspended from the roof, upon which water was gradually poured, which, slowly dissolving the pillars, at length the roof fell with a crash.

Prophet! Behold," he continued, as he took a casket from the hands of one of the soldiers, "these jewels; and thou," addressing himself to the Mufti and people, "listen, while I proclaim that I myself was present when, with these jewels, the Vizier attempted to bribe the Astrologer of the faithful, the great Almanzor, so to misread the stars, as to give to the Christians, from whom Calil had received these gems, time to defeat the projects of the Sultan, and scatter his soldiers in the dust."

A murmur of indignation was heard amongst the crowd.

"For the crime of impiety," continued Mahomet, when the sound had subsided, "the Prophet has declared there is no pardon." Then again addressing the Mufti as the highest officer present, he added, "Do thou take from him who was the Vizier the seal of the Sultan—and that the impious may bear no sign of a true believer, let his beard be cut off."

Thus saying, Mahomet, who always managed if possible to give a religious turn to his deeds of violence, again seated himself on his throne—the Mufti drew from the vest of Calil the great seal of

the empire, which the Vizier always carries in his breast; and in another instant Calil Pacha, stripped of his turban and beard—the greatest indignity that can be offered to a Mussulman—was writhing in the hands of the hideous negroes. Two of them stretched him upon the machine, while the others bound his hands; and then all four commenced beating him on the feet, hands, and body, with heavy golden rods, until the cries of the tortured man reached to the furthest parts of the arena.

In no other nation could have been found an assembly of such numbers as now covered the Hippodrome, which could have calmly looked down upon the torture of a fellow creature without exhibiting one sign of pity or disgust;—but the Turks, habituated to repress all demonstration of feeling, stood around cold and grave, as if intent upon numbering the strokes which fell upon the victim. Soon the agony became insupportable. At every blow the blood sprung forth even to the foot of the throne; and Mahomet with a savage grin encouraged by signs the zeal of the torturing fiends. In vain did the wretched Calil confess his crimes—in vain implore one moment's cessation of his

anguish; his prayers were unheeded by the cruel sovereign he had betrayed, and so still was the multitude around, that he might have deemed himself alone with his executioners, had it not been for the thousand eyes which, in coldness or disdain, met his imploring glance. Every sob of the victim could be heard afar, and heavy and short they came; for his strength was failing, and the heart-rending shriek now died upon the quivering lip.

Not half the destined number of blows had been inflicted ere the keen eye of Mahomet marked the failing strength of the unhappy Calil. To allow him to die at once, would have been to lose the sweets of revenge; and Mahomet was about to order the suspension of the torture, when a sound arose, which for a moment distracted the attention of all around. It came from the centre of the crowd; and the Sultan started, as he beheld an immense body of the Janissaries making their way forward, and bearing down all before them. If Mahomet could be said to stand in awe of any beings, human or divine, it was of the very body he had himself so lately re-organized, and to which such privileges had been granted, that, in the insolence of their elevation, the

Janissaries had more than once shown symptoms of a spirit very unusual in a nation of slaves. A sudden revulsion of feeling came over the Sultan, as he marked their approach; but his fears were calmed when he beheld them halt, while one of their number advanced to the circle around the throne. But this one alone, although he appeared scarcely to have passed the age of boyhood, seemed imbued with the spirit of a thousand heroes. Fearless, and unarmed, he forced aside the guards who would have held him back, and, rushing to the foot of the throne, prostrated himself before the Sultan, demanding the instant release of the prisoner.

"What means this insolence?" exclaimed Mahomet, making a sign to the negroes to desist from their horrid task.

"May it please the Sultan of the world," replied a voice, so sweet that it sounded like music in the air, "to listen to his slave. I come not to crave a boon, but to claim a right."

"A right?" said Mahomet, looking contemptuously upon the youthful figure at his feet.

"Yes, most mighty Sovereign, a right; for thy gracious words did promise, that he who first stood

upon the walls of Constantinople should claim, as a right, all that he chose to ask. My foot was the first that entered the breach; I have as yet asked nothing; but he who is the light of the world, the glory of the East, and the terror of the Infidels, will not forget his words."

"Who is there who will vouch for the truth of thine?" asked Mahomet, strangely interested by the courage and noble manner, almost verging upon haughtiness, yet blended with a softness scarce belonging to a man.

"Isfendar, the Agha of the Janissaries; nay, all who survived that hour, will bear witness of my truth," said the youth proudly. "My foot was first upon the walls, and the hand that first planted the crescent on the Christian tower was mine. I ask not for gold or power; grant me but the captive of my sword, Demetrius of Ypsara, and," pointing to the bleeding Vizier, "what remains of life in that poor old man, and thy servant is satisfied."

The voice of the speaker faltered as the names of the prisoners passed his lips, as though some secret linked his fate with theirs; and the brow of Mahomet grew dark, for his tyrant heart ever

trembled as any mystery suggested the idea of treason.

"What means this strange request?" he asked, at the same time bending on the young Janissary a look so keen, that he bowed his head beneath it.

"Young man, thou hast chosen ill—take what thou wilt of gold and gems—nay, the fairest province of my empire shall be thine—but know that the hours of the prisoners are already numbered—they die before the sun has set."

"No, they shall not die," said the youth, starting to his feet, but with a shriek that ill became the courage of a soldier, "I have redeemed their lives. The promise of the Sultan is sacred. I ask but justice—I pray but for my own; it is a wife who prays for her husband—a child for her parent. I am the daughter of the Vizier!"—and throwing off the turban and beard of the Janissary, she drew the long black tresses of her hair partly over her face, and, trembling with shame and fear as she quitted her disguise, Chezmé knelt before the Sultan.

A murmur of admiration rose on all sides, but in none did the feeling glow so fervently, as in the

breast of him who betrayed the least emotion; the daring of Chezmé was so different from the usual character of Turkish women, and so congenial to the ardent spirit of Mahomet, that he gazed for some time in total silence upon the slight girlish form of the being before him, who could hazard such a deed, for the sake of those she loved; and if the memory of Ida recurred to him, it was with a pang more of sorrow than of anger, as he confessed to himself, that the devotion of woman surpassed the things of earth.

"How," said Mahomet gently, "thou art that Chezmé, of whom I have heard so much?"

"I am Chezmé, the daughter of Calil Pacha. I fled from Adrianople, to avoid marrying one I did not love; and in the disguise of a Dervish braved the dangers of the Turkish camp, to watch over the interests of those who were dear to me, and to serve them if I could."

"And thou hast served them!" exclaimed Mahomet—"nobly served them; and thy courage shall be rewarded. For thy sake, the Sultan will stay his wrath, and revoke his words—the prisoners are free—and have leave to depart; and thou, Chezmé,

shalt choose in what province of the empire, a palace shall be erected for thee."

Chezmé could only answer by her tears; and Mahomet, with the feeling of gladness which must sometimes enter the heart of man, however depraved, when conscious of having done a good action, descended from his throne; and mounting his horse, took his way to the church of Saint Sophia, now converted into a mosque, to be present at the public thanksgiving he had ordered, for the success of his arms against Constantinople.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

At the moment when Hassan had caught the child of Ida, as the barbarian had snatched it from her arms with the intention of dashing it on the ground, the rage of the Mussulmen for blood had somewhat abated. Tired with slaughter, their cruel fury no longer sought for victims; and, contented with making prisoners, they drove before them all those who remained within the church.

Step by step, Hassan had retreated with his charge—now cowering behind a pillar—now protected by the frantic groups which endeavoured to oppose or avoid the advancing Mussulmen. At length, farther retreat seemed impossible; and Hassan, crouching behind a marble shrine, upon which stood a figure of the Virgin, awaited the death he no longer expected to escape. With Melanthe clasped to his breast, he knelt upon the pavement, his forehead pressed against the back

of the pedestal which supported the statue. For some time, so great was his terror, that he was not conscious that the support against which he leaned was gradually giving way; but at length, to his joy, he perceived that the pedestal was hollow, and by pressing the moulded edge of the panel, he easily forced it back sufficiently to admit his hand. There, however, all his discovery seemed to terminate. No exertion of strength could move the marble doors either farther apart or into their original position. The hope which had lighted in his bosom was quickly extinguished, and again, the unhappy Hassan sought refuge from despair in that spirit of resignation to his fate to which all Mussulmen turn in the hour of danger.

The scene within the church had now changed. The Sultan had sworn, that ere sunset the magnificent Saint Sophia should be a Turkish mosque; and as all ornaments therein are forbidden, by the Moslem religion, the fury of slaughter was exchanged for the demolition of inanimate objects. Paintings and statues, monuments and altars, rare marbles, and the rich mosaic of the pavement and walls, were torn from their places, and hurled in a con-

fused mass into the centre of the building. Trembling with fear, Hassan beheld from his concealment the work of devastation, and clinging still closer to the marble, what was his surprise, as the blows of the huge hammer of one of the Infidels struck at the base of the pedestal, to see the panels gradually recede. With difficulty he suppressed a cry of delight as another blow and another, working probably on some secret spring, still further enlarged the aperture.

Without delay, Hassan darted into the cavity, supporting Melanthe with one arm, while with the other he felt his way. He had not proceeded far when a sudden gleam of light flashed upon his path, sufficient to show him what appeared an interminable flight of steps; and then a heavy fall above, and the rolling of detached stones beneath his feet, told him that his retreat was cut off. He was so bewildered by the idea of being thus buried beneath the church, that at first he could scarcely rejoice in his escape from immediate destruction; but a little while restored his senses. Cautiously descending, after infinite toil, and being obliged constantly to retrace his steps, he reached

the vaults below the church, which, though Hassan could not be aware of the fact, had been used during the siege as a general depository of property.

Here another difficulty presented itself. On every side, the way was hemmed in by objects which he could not distinguish. More than once, he sat down to collect, if possible, from the sounds which reached him from above, some information as to his position. Though mellowed by distance, he could still hear the well-known Moslem cry; and now and then a heavy crash announced that the work of destruction was not yet completed. Sick at heart, the unhappy Hassan again attempted to pursue his way, when, as he stood uncertain how to turn, he fancied that a blast of air, more fresh than he had hitherto felt, betokened some outlet near. Cautiously moving in the direction thus indicated, he came, at last, to a low iron door. It was unclosed, and with joy Hassan perceived a faint glimmer beyond. Hastily mounting the steps, a few minutes brought him to a grating, which having removed, he found himself, to his unspeakable delight once again inhaling the fresh air of heaven.

As he stood at the mouth of the vault, his first impulse was to return thanks to God for his delivery from peril, for Hassan was a good Mussulman. His next, was to ascertain how far his removal from immediate danger might conduce to his ultimate escape. To reach the shore, and seek for safety in some land where the Moslem name was heard without fear, was the ardent desire of Hassan. The straits were crowded with ships of all nations; but how to traverse a city in the hands of his most deadly foe (for by his desertion of his sovereign he had incurred the penalty of an apostate), was more than the prolific brain of Hassan could speedily determine.

To avoid detection, he had assumed the dress of a Greek, with the language of whose nation he was well acquainted; and though he had contrived to secrete the jewels and money with which he had quitted the Turkish camp, as well as those given to him by Ida, they were for the moment rendered useless by the peculiarity of his situation. No hope remained, except to avail himself of the coming darkness in order to reach the shore; and, retreating within the shelter of the vault, Hassan waited patiently, until the twinkling of the stars

gave notice that day had faded from the earth. But he had ill calculated, when he supposed that the victorious Mussulmen would so quickly resume their habits of decorum and tranquillity during the hours of night. No sooner had he emerged from his hiding place, than sounds of merriment, unusual in a Turkish camp, greeted his ear. Though the slaughter had ceased, yet more than one unhappy Greek was sacrificed, in mere wantonness of spirit, by straggling parties of the victors, who, despite the Moslem law, were all intoxicated. The gravity of the Turks was replaced by the most frantic demonstrations of joy and ferocity; and well might Hassan tremble, as, taking advantage of the shadow the long and narrow street afforded, he endeavoured to follow in the wake of a body of soldiers, who, as they passed on, filled the air with their shouts, and wantonly struck at every object within their reach.

A great part of the town had been traversed in this manner, and Hassan still hoped to reach the shore undiscovered, when an accident threatened to bring instant death upon him. Melanthe, who had hitherto remained passive, now alarmed by the shouts of the soldiers, began to cry violently, and

the sound catching the ear of the hindmost of the drunken troop, it halted. Hassan could see in the twilight, the flashing of their scimitars, and the glimmer of their white turbans, as the Ottoman soldiers rushed towards him, in the savage hope of adding another to their list of victims. Frantic with terror, Hassan turned upon his steps; and ignorant of the position in which he stood, he took the first path which presented itself, and fled down the narrow street, pursued by the Turks, whose cries grew more fierce as their victim seemed to elude their grasp.

He had nearly reached the end of the street, when, to his horror, he perceived, not twenty yards in advance, a similar body of soldiers to that from which he fled. The new comers were armed with torches, which they brandished with the fury of madmen. Already the unhappy fugitive seemed to feel the glare upon his brow—his knees trembled—his hands shook; another second, and all would have been over, when the light falling on the opposite side of the street, revealed to his eager glance the open door of a dwelling which stood retired from the rest, and was of larger dimensions than those by

which it was surrounded. One bound, and Hassan was safe within its walls. The heavy door closed behind him, and he sunk exhausted within its shelter. Not long, however, could he remain in peace. The heavy blows upon the door, and the savages cries with which they were accompanied, as, with the tenacity of drunken rage, the Turks seemed resolved upon the pursuit they had commenced, warned Hassan to depart. A flight of marble stairs was made visible by a light which gleamed from an open door above. Hassan bounded up the steps, and stood within the chamber.

Alas! what a sample did it afford of the horrors which had been that day enacted within the city! Across the threshold lay the body of a man in the prime of life; while farther on, extended on a couch, was the lifeless form of one whom not even the love of a husband could shield from the fury of the victors! The young and beauteous head was almost severed from the body, and the jewelled girdle, torn from the slender waist, lay broken and trampled on the floor. A whole history was in that broken clasp - - - and the heart of Hassan swelled, as he thought upon the wrongs of his own child, and

gazed on the pallid face of the young wife who had seen her husband vainly butchered before her eyes!

But the blows of the pursuers grew louder and louder. Hassan looked hastily around. There was food upon the table, and a lamp still gleamed from an alcove. A sudden thought seemed to strike upon his mind. Seizing a mantle which lay upon the ground, he carefully wrapped Melanthe within its folds; then, having provided himself with all the food he could carry, he took the lamp, and descending the stairs, resolved to seek for shelter in the vaulted passages which he knew composed the lower part of every Grecian palace. Scarcely had he discovered the steps which led from the hall, when the blows which had continued to pour upon the door suddenly ceased, and then, with a roar which froze the blood of the fugitive, a thunder of assault commenced, and in another instant, his last hope was gone, the door yielded, and ere Hassan could partially close that by which he descended, a score of turbaned heads were visible in the entrance.

Catching the glimmer of the light, with shouts of Alláh! Alláh! the infuriated Turks, driven to madness by the effects of the wine they had swal-

lowed, rushed upon his steps; but Hassan had gained an advantage which he was too prudent to lose, and onward he flew with the haste that fear alone can give. With the speed of light, he traversed the gloomy passages before him, and still the cries of his enemies sounded in his ear, when—oh! joy! is it the ocean that he has gained? Water sparkles before him—where is he? The groined arch above his head, the fluted pillar by his side, the marble steps on which he treads, Hassan sees none of these—a boat—a small and solitary boat, lay moored upon the dark bosom of the tide. One moment, and the chain sinks in the wave, and Hassan and his infant charge have trusted their safety to the frail bark, which shoots like an arrow from the shore.

## CHAPTER XXX.

Impelled by the vigorous arm of Hassan, the shouts of whose pursuers still rung in his ears, the light skiff darted forwards over the smooth surface of the water; and it was not until a long interval of unbroken silence had calmed his terrors, that he relaxed his efforts. Then, for the first time, he observed the impenetrable depth of gloom by which he was surrounded. It might be the flicker of the lamp which he had placed in the stern of the boat, which cheated the eye of Hassan, as he glanced fearfully around, but yet it was strange - - - and an insurmountable presentiment of danger gradually stole over the spirit of joy with which he had quitted the shore. An hour or more must have elapsed, and still every where the same objects met his view; the meeting of the arch above his head, while a forest of pillars seemed to rise on every side, and below the waveless deep—black, sullen, and horribly calm, like the darkness of a despairing soul,

Hassan trembled as the chill of that terrible ocean vault seemed to freeze the blood in his veins; and wrapping the poor infant he had saved, still more closely in the folds of its mantle, he laid it upon his bosom.

It slept:—and Hassan gazed upon its little face, until the tears bedewed his own. Had he snatched it from one fate, to yield it to another too frightful to contemplate! a living tomb—a tomb among the waters;—and he thought of the silvery ocean studded with white-sailed ships; and shuddering, looked down upon the still, black lake, stranger alike to the glimmer of the midnight star, or the smile of the gay sunbeam.

Into what mysterious cavern had the fate o the unhappy Hassan driven him? More than once did he utter this exclamation aloud, and the echoes gave back his words with horrible distinctness, till the sound died away in laughing whispers among the arches, as though the fiends kept holiday to mock the anguish of mortal fear. Vainly did Hassan pray, and still more vainly weep—and wildly strain the oar again, to speed along the trackless aisle of the ocean cloister; the same view

rose around, and all hope of escape seemed fruitless. Fiercely struggling, the yet uncrushed spirit of man contended with the prospect of death, and for many hours the patient Hassan kept his onward course, in the faint hope that he might even regain the spot from whence he had started. Why had he been in such haste to quit the shore? It seemed to him now, that even the pursuit of the infuriated Turks was less to be feared than the dreadful death he had so dearly purchased. And Melanthe, the child of his benefactor, the daughter of Ida, that angel in woman's form, who had tended him in sickness, and watched by his couch, speaking words of comfort to calm the terrors of his guilty soul—alas! must her child perish in his arms? Could he not save it from death—save it, if but to redeem, by the gratitude he felt for its parents, the treachery he had practised towards his sovereign? Poor Hassan! how did his heart bleed, as he gazed upon that child whom he had vowed to protect.

Hour after hour passed on:—with scarcely a hope to support him, he endeavoured to advance; but his strength was failing; the feeble stroke scarce

kept the slender bark from contact with the columns which seemed, as if by magic, to spring from the depth of the waters; and the heart of Hassan sickened, as his eye rested upon their ever multiplying forms. But now—is it that his straining gaze has lost its power?—the pillars grow less clear—the shadows dim—still, still more dim; and Hassan grasps the oar—on springs the boat—again the white arch gleams above his head—again the dark wave ripples as he flies, and then he pauses—oh! horror! how the light flickers and wanes! "The lamp—the lamp," cried Hassan, with a shriek, stretching his hand towards it; and the glare of madness lights his eye, as the last gleam shoots up above the boat. Then all is dark—dark—silent as the tomb, save that the deep sob of bitter misery trembles through the chill and murky air, as, on the cheek of helpless infancy, the strong man's head is pillowed now—to die!

## CHAPTER XXXI.

The sufferings of the succeeding hours were dreadful! More than once the sinking spirit of Hassan contemplated a speedy release, by a plunge into the dark gulf, upon whose bosom he lay helpless, while life ebbed slowly away. But the child he held within his arms!—could he leave it to die alone!—or take the life he once had saved? The heart of Hassan would not harbour such a thought. And yet, how soon must death claim the fragile form he clasped so fondly! The food he had brought with him was exhausted,—the cold had numbed the tender limbs, which Hassan vainly attempted to chafe; and the cries of the terrified infant grew more and more feeble, as, appalled by the darkness, it clung to the breast of its protector!

Without a hope, and endeavouring to resign himself to the horrors of a lingering death, Hassan now laid himself down. So motionless was the

water, that he could feel that the column against which the boat had rested, still touched its side. How often, during those weary hours, did he raise his languid hand to touch the fluted stone, and sink again in despair, as he found himself moored as it were by a viewless power to the spot! So still and changeless had been his position for many hours, that it was not without a feeling of increased horror, that he at length fancied he perceived a slight rocking motion in the boat. The superstition of Hassan was extreme, and now he trembled afresh, as many of the traditions of Greece, as well as those of his own land, crowded upon his overwrought fancy.

Without air, what could cause the sudden movement he had felt? Was it some monster of the deep come, at the appointed time, to call him to the regions below the wave, where the Turks fancy all who perish on the sea, are summoned to receive their judgment? or was it on the bosom of the stream which wafts the Grecian souls to realms of darkness, that he had sought refuge?

The terror of Hassan rapidly increased; but in another instant, even fear was merged in the stun-

ning sensation which overwhelmed him. A sound as of thunder rose in the distance ; and as it passed away, the waters trembled at its angry voice ; and the fragile boat rocked wildly to and fro. A deep silence followed, and Hassan could almost hear the beating of his heart, as he lay breathlessly watching for the return of that frightful sound. It came again, now no longer rumbling and distant, but nearer and nearer, until it seemed above, below, and filling every space around him, and then a sheet of flame, bursting from all sides, lit up the watery palace, and myriads of pillars seemed to dance before the wondering eyes of Hassan !

One second, and the light was gone ; it vanished with a crash, as though the angry heavens had dashed another world upon the earth ! and again and again it returned ; and out of the bosom of that waveless deep, arose a hissing sound, and Hassan saw that above his head the flames were bursting in every direction. Frantic with terror, he tried to wind his arms around the pillar near him, but the effort was vain. The trembling skiff was driven to and fro, and a thick smoke filled the air.

At last the sounds grew less frequent, and more

faint—the smoke gradually dispersed—and in a little while Hassan was weeping with joy—a soft light gleamed around. It was the light of heaven; and through the cleft arches above his head, the bright blue sky smiled down, and life and liberty were in that smile. Strange and wild, among the echoes of that ocean palace, now sounded the words of thanksgiving which Hassan poured forth to God; yet scarcely had he uttered them, when a new danger seemed about to snatch from him the hope he had just conceived. His boat, from some unseen impulse, began to glide rapidly over the water; he seized the oar, and by strong efforts for some time avoided the contact of the pillars; but soon the stream became so impetuous, that it bore him along with an overwhelming rapidity. Another moment, and the rushing sound of a cataract met his ear; a blaze of sunlight followed; and when he recovered from the suddenness of the shock, which had released him from his prison, he found himself still at the bottom of his boat, which was safely embedded in the ruins of the watery vault.

With as much of awe as of surprise, Hassan gazed upon the scene before him, and the mystery

of his late position was revealed. A magazine of powder had burst above the subterranean river, which seemed to him to wind beneath the city; and from its crumbling arches the waters of this monstrous reservoir were now pouring into the valley below. One side was laid open to the day, and Hassan shuddered anew as he saw, through the shattered walls, the countless stems of the pillars in the labyrinth of which he had passed the night. A broken aqueduct at a short distance showed clearly the means by which the vaulted lake had been filled; but Hassan had little time now to admire the grandeur of the device by which, in case of siege, the city could be supplied with water: still less to think with reverence on the mighty mind which had planned and executed this wondrous scheme. The wishes of Hassan had only one object—to leave as quickly as might be the land where he had suffered so much. Without any great difficulty he contrived to extricate himself from the ruined walls where his boat was still secured; and pressing Melanthe to his breast, as he knelt upon the green sward of the valley, he implored the blessing of Heaven and the Prophet;

and having, as a good Mussulman, repeated sundry prayers, and the hundred and four attributes of Alláh, he felt his courage revive, and with confidence took his way to the shore, which was crowded with people. He there learned the proclamation, by which the Sultan permitted all the Greeks to remain in the City of Constantinople, or depart from it, according to their own desire. The latter alternative had been eagerly adopted by the greater number, and the waves of the Bosphorus gleamed with the white sails of the many vessels, the owners of which were busily employed in making their bargains for the transport of their countrymen to other shores.

Some were going to Italy—some to Spain; and Hassan eagerly secured a passage in a small vessel bound for Naples: but before he would enter the sanctuary which would place him beyond the reach of the Sultan, at whose name he trembled, the grateful heart of Hassan prompted him to risk his own safety by pausing to make inquiries as to the fate of Ida and Elphenor. Of the latter he could gain no intelligence; so many Greeks had already departed, that it was probable, as his death had not

been mentioned, that Elphenor was of the number; but even among the scenes of horror which had been lately enacted, the inhuman murder of Ida by the hand of the Sultan was a fact of so much notoriety that Hassan could not doubt the words of the many, who, with expressions of detestation towards its perpetrator, related it to him.

It was too true! Ida, the beautiful and the good, had perished beneath the blow of the disappointed tyrant; and Hassan, as he remembered her kindness to himself, and the devoted love she bore to her child, forgot the passive sternness practised by those of his nation, and suffered his tears to fall upon the brow of the motherless babe he pressed to his bosom.

"Would that I had died for her!" he murmured, as he looked upon the child of Ida; "but *Insh Alláh*, please God, thou shalt be saved! Hassan is not ungrateful. Yes—*Insh Alláh*, thou shalt be saved! Hassan will work for thee—he will take thee where no cruel Sultan can find thee; and will be to thee a father. His sin is great, but his trials have been greater; and he trusts in God! *Lá ilhahi il Alláh!* There is no God but God!

and Mahomet is his Prophet!" and Hassan turned his face to the East, as he concluded his soliloquy, and stood for some moments in prayer, ere, with Melanthe, he entered the vessel which was to convey them to Italy.

END OF VOLUME I.

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